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# WITH THE PERSIAN EXPEDITION

BY

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TO THE MEMORY OF  
MY COMRADES OF THE IMPERIAL AND  
DOMINION FORCES  
WHO, IN THE CONCLUDING YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR,  
GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THE WORLD'S FREEDOM  
IN PERSIA AND TRANSCAUCASIA.

## PREFACE

No one can be more alive than I am to the fact that of the making of war books there is no end, nor can anyone hear mentally more plainly than I do how, at each fresh appearance of a work dealing with the world tragedy of the past five years, weary reviewers and jaded public alike exclaim, "What? Yet another!" Why, then, have I added this of mine to the already so formidable list?

Well, chiefly because in the beginning of 1918 Fate and the War Office sent me into a field of operations almost unknown and unheeded of the average home-keeping Briton—viz., that of North-West Persia, in the land lying towards the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea; and my experiences there led me into bypaths of the Great War so unusual as to seem well worth describing, quite apart from the military importance of the movements of which they were but a minute part.

However, in the latter aspect, too, I hope my book will serve as a useful footnote to the history of the gigantic struggle now happily ended.

The story of the Persian campaign needed to be told, and I am glad to add my humble quota to the recital. It is the story of a little force operating far



away from the limelight, unknown to the people at home, and seemingly forgotten a great part of the time even by the authorities themselves. It was to this force—commanded by General Dunsterville, and hence known to those who knew it at all as “Dunsterforce”—that I was attached, and it is about it that I have written here. I have tried to make clear what the “Dunsterforce” was, why it was sent out, and how far it succeeded in accomplishing its mission. In order to do this I have been obliged to treat rather fully both of local geography and politics. For here we had no clear-cut campaign in which all the people of one country were in arms against all the people of another country. No! It was a very mixed-up and complicated business, as anyone who troubles to read what I have written will readily see.

Then, again, it was a war waged distinctly off the beaten track. During its progress we came across tribes to whom Great Britain was as some legendary land in another solar sphere—tribes to whom the aeroplane and the automobile were undreamed-of marvels—tribes, finally, whose habitat and modes of life and thought are almost as unknown to the average European as his are to them. For this reason I have devoted some space to descriptions of places and people as I saw them.

A word should perhaps be said as to how and why I happened to be there at all.

War has figured very largely in my life. For the past twenty years, as Special Correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, I have been privileged to be present at most of the world's great upheavals, both military and political.

From July, 1914, on, for some eighteen months, I followed the fortunes of the Entente armies in the field as a war chronicler, first in Serbia, next in Belgium, and afterwards in Italy and Greece—a poor journalistic Lazarus picking up such crumbs of news as fell from the overladen table of Dives, the Censor. But I was not happy, because I felt I was not doing my “bit” as effectively as I might; so I followed the example of millions of other citizens of the Empire and joined the army. Detailed to the Intelligence Corps, I was sent first to Roumania, then to Russia. Escaping from the “Red Terror” in Petrograd, I finally found myself one day embarking for the remote land of Iran as Special Service Officer with “Dunsterforce”—at which point this chronicle begins.

THE AUTHOR.

PARIS,  
October, 1919.



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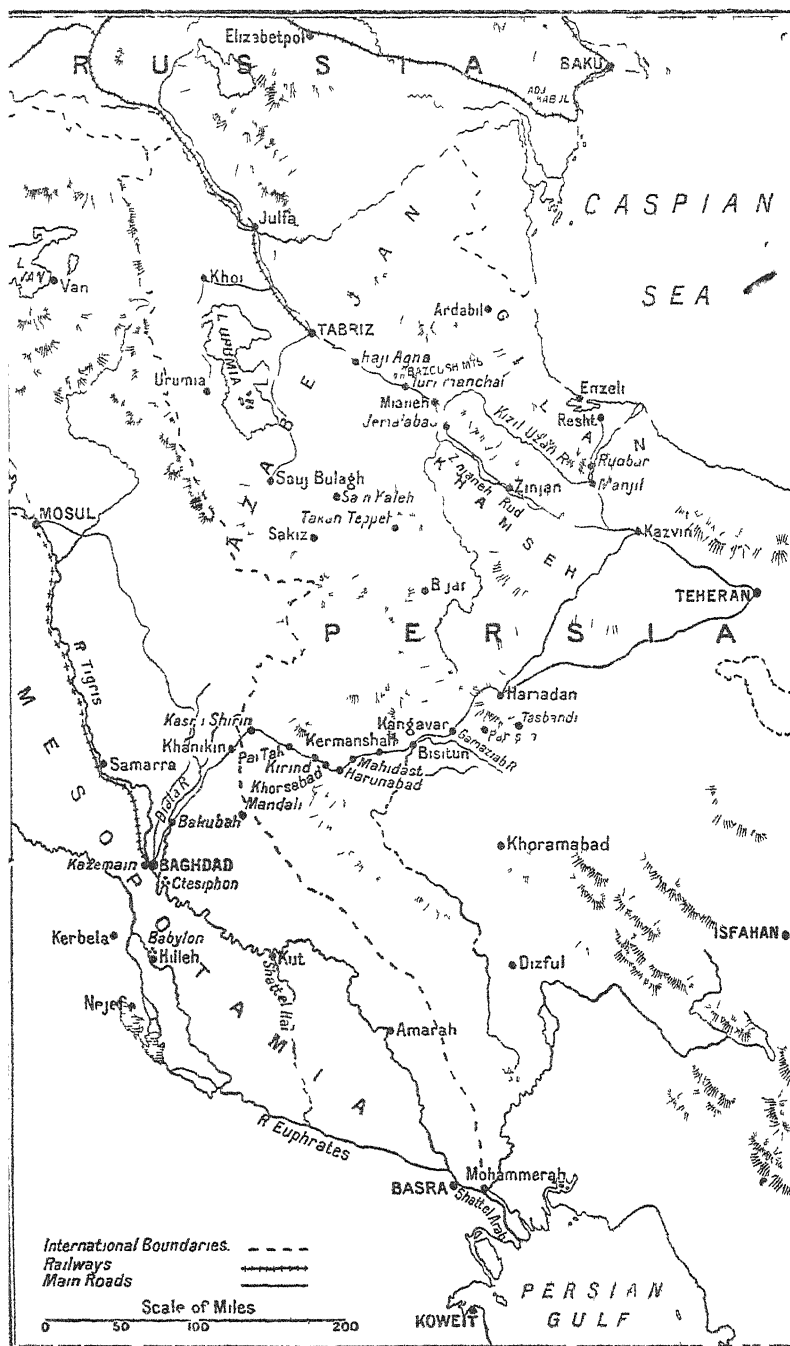


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# WITH THE PERSIAN EXPEDITION

## CHAPTER I

### THE START OF THE "HUSH-HUSH" BRIGADE

A mystery expedition—Tower of London conference.—From Flanders mud to Eastern dust—An Imperial forlorn hope—Some fine fighting types—The amphibious purser—In the submarine zone—Our Japanese escort

SCARCELY had dawn tinged the sky of a February day in 1918 when there crept out of the inner harbour of Taranto a big transport bound for Alexandria. It was laden with British and Dominion troops.

All were for service overseas. There were units for India and Egypt, a contingent of Nursing Sisters for East Africa, and a detachment of Sappers for Aden. The transport stealing noiselessly towards the open sea was the P. and O. liner *Malwa*, and, as a precaution against submarine attack, she had been so extensively and grotesquely camouflaged by dockyard artists in black and white that some of her own crew coming alongside on a dark night had difficulty in recognizing her.

The *Malwa*, too, had on board the members of a military expedition, surely one of the most extra-

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ordinary that ever crossed the sea to fight the battles of the Empire in distant lands. Our official designation was the "Dunsterville" or "Bagdad Party"; but War Office cynics, and the dainsel who sold us our patent filters and Tommy Cookers at the military equipment stores in London, knew us as the "Hush-hush" Brigade. And the "Hush-hush" Brigade we were privileged to remain. This nickname met us in Alexandria, followed us to Cairo and distant Basra, and preceded us to the City of the Caliphs on the shores of the muddy-brown Tigris.

On the eve of the departure from England of the main body for the Italian port of embarkation, a heart-to-heart talk between General Sir William Robertson and the members of the Bagdad Party had taken place at the Tower of London. The veil of official secrecy was drawn ever so little aside, and, allowed a peep behind, we beheld a field of military activity with a distinctly Eastern setting. Men who had been "over the top" in Flanders heard with a joyous throb of expectation that the next time they went into the line would be probably somewhere in Persia or the Caucasus. They were as happy as children at the prospect, finding it a welcome relief from muddy tramps through the low-lying lands of the Western Front, the dull grey skies, the monotony of life in flooded trenches under incessant bombardment, varied only by an occasional rush across No-Man's Land to get at the Hun throat. We were going from mud to dust, but hurrah! anyway.

On that February morning, as the *Malwa* slipped past Taranto town and into the roadstead where lay her Japanese destroyer escort, the roll-call of the Bagdad Party showed a strength of 70 officers and 140 N.C.O's. This was to be the nucleus of a force which we hoped would combat and overthrow Bolshevism, make common cause with Armenians, Georgians, and Tartars, raise and train local levies, and bar with a line of bayonets the further progress of Turk and German by way of the Caspian Sea and Russian Turkestan towards the Gates of India.

With few exceptions our party consisted of Dominion soldiers gathered from the remote corners of the Empire. There were Anzacs and Springboks, Canadians from the far North-West, men who had charged up the deadly shell-swept slopes of Gallipoli, and those who had won through at Vimy Ridge. They were, in fact, a hardened band of adventurous soldiers, fit to go anywhere and do anything, men who had lived on the brink of the pit for three years and had come back from the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

The War Office needed the raw material for a desperate enterprise. It was found by Brigadier-General Byron, himself an able and experienced soldier with a brilliant South African fighting reputation. He went across to Flanders and picked out the cream of the fighting men from the South African contingent and from the magnificent Australian and Canadian Divisions. I do not recall a single officer



once in the front line in Flanders on suspicion of being a German spy dressed in British uniform.

Colonel Smiles of the Armoured Car Section was another interesting figure. A descendant of Smiles of "Self-Help" fame, he had won the D.S.O. and the Cross of St. George while fighting with the Locker-Lampson unit in Russia.

Where practically every second man had a record of thrilling deeds behind him it is difficult to individualize, but a word must be given to Colonel Warden, D.S.O., of the Canadian Contingent. "Honest John" was the affectionate nickname bestowed upon him by the ship's company, who found a special fascination in his childlike simplicity of character combined with exceptional soldierly qualities.

Another refreshingly original type was Colonel Donnan, the C.O. of the party. Apart from other things, his physical qualities seemed to mark him out for the important post he occupied. They were ~~calculated~~ to strike terror into any Hun or other heart. A veritable Sandow, his burly thick-set figure, black bristling moustache, and dark piercing eyes were valuable assets for the man whose task was to discipline such a mixed company as ours, and the nurses all <sup>ex</sup>ected an exaggerated terror of them, well <sup>in</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>minxes!</sup> that they were, but the outworks of the fortress behind which was entrenched the Colonel's kind heart—outworks apt to go down like ninepins when assailed by a woman's tearful pleadings.



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Colonel Donnan is one of the strong, silent Englishmen who have done so much in an unostentatious way to push the interests of the British Empire in the far-off places of the earth. A great Orientalist, he has passed through many Eastern lands in disguise, bringing back precious fruits of his labours in a store of information, both military and political, gathered in his journeyings.

The *Malva* boasted an amphibious purser named Milman. For three and a half years, ever since the war began, he had been sailing up and down the seas from London to Rio, and from Bombay to Liverpool, and he knew from personal contact the summer and winter temperature of the Mediterranean Sea better than did any meteorologist from collected data. In fact, he had been torpedoed so many times that he had begun to look upon it as part of the routine of his daily life. He possessed a life-saving suit, his own improved design, which was at once the wonder and admiration of all who inspected it. It was of rubber, in form not unlike a diving dress, with a hood which came over the head of the wearer and was made fast under the chin. In front were two pockets, which always remained ready rationed with a spirit-flask, some sandwiches, and a pack of patience cards. It was the purser's travelling outfit, when he was overboard in the Mediterranean or elsewhere and waiting to be hauled on board a rescue boat.

Occasionally when, in harbour, time hung heavily on his hands, this amphibious purser would clothe

himself in his rubber suit, slip over the ship's side, and go off for an outing. Once in Port Said, while gently floating off on one of these aquatic excursions, he was sighted by the port guardship, and a picket-boat was sent to fish him out under the impression that he was dead. "This bloke is a gonner all right!" said one of the crew, as he reached for him with a boathook. Then the "corpse" sat up and said things. So did the spokesman of the astonished crew when, having recovered from the shock, he found his voice again.

Milman was a cheery optimist. Nothing ever perturbed him. He was a recognized authority on "silver fish" (*i.e.*, torpedoes) and cocktails, was an excellent raconteur, and possessed all the suavity and tact of a finished diplomat. When nervous ladies worried the doctor and cross-examined him as to the habits and hunting methods of Hun submarines, he invariably passed them on to the purser, and ~~aways~~ with the happiest results; for, under the spell of Milman's racy talk, they soon forgot their fears.

The second day out from Taranto brought us well within the submarine danger zone. We changed course repeatedly, for wireless had warned us of the proximity of the dreaded sea pirate. The *Tagus*, our fellow transport, proved herself a laggard; she was falling behind, and keeping station badly, and the Commodore of our ~~escort~~ <sup>name</sup> escort was busy hurling remonstrances at her in the Morse code.

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Our three Japanese destroyers made diligent and efficient scouts. They gambolled over the blue waters of the Mediterranean like so many sheep-dogs protecting a moorland flock. Now one or another raced away to starboard, then to port, then circled round and round us, took station amidships, or dropped astern.

Their tactics, perhaps one should say their antics, must have been extremely baffling, even exasperating, to any enemy submarine commander lying low in the hope of bagging the *Malwa* or the *Tagus*. Nothing seemed to escape the keen-eyed sailors of the Mikado's navy. Experience had taught them the value of seagulls as submarine spotters. Endowed with extraordinary instinct and eyes that see far below the surface of the sea, the resting gulls detect a submarine coming up anywhere in their vicinity, take fright, and hurriedly fly away. Whenever the gulls gave the signal—and there were many false alarms—a Japanese destroyer would race to the spot in readiness for Herr Pirate; but he never appeared.

However, the Hun was not always so cautious. There was great rejoicing on board the *Malwa* when the wireless told us that west of us, in the Malta Channel, Japanese vigilance had been rewarded, transports saved from destruction, and two enemy submarines sent to the bottom. It was all the work of a few minutes. Whether the enemy failed to sight the destroyers, or whether they intended to chance their luck and fight them, is not quite clear. At all

events, Submarine No. 1 popped up dead ahead of one destroyer and was promptly rammed and sunk. Submarine No. 2 met with an equally unmistakable end. I had already singled out a transport for attack when a second Japanese destroyer engaged it at seven hundred yards' range and blew its hull to pieces.

Nevertheless it was an anxious time for us on the *Talwa* living in hourly dread of being torpedoed. The Nursing Sisters professed to treat the danger with scorn; they were courageous and cheery souls, and would unhesitatingly have faced death with the equanimity of the bravest man.

Ten in the forenoon and five in the afternoon were the hours of greatest peril, when submarine attacks might be specially expected. Everyone "stood to" at these hours, wearing the regulation lifebelt, and ready to take to the boats if the ship were hit and in danger of sinking. Colonel Donnan, C.O. ship, was a strict disciplinarian. He enhanced the somewhat piratical ferocity of mien with which nature had gifted him by always carrying his service revolver buckled on and ready for any emergency, and the Nursing Sisters professed to be in great trepidation each time at inspection parade when he ran his critical eye over their life-saving equipment. Of course knots sometimes went wrong, and the strings of the life-belt were tied the incorrect way; but volunteers were never lacking to adjust the erring straps and to see that they sat on a pretty pair of

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shoulders in the manner laid down in Regulations, while the ferociously tender-hearted C. O. smiled approval.

On the fourth day after leaving Taranto the *Malwa* steamed into Alexandria Harbour. Everyone was in the highest spirits. We had escaped the submarine peril, and the period of nervous tension while waiting in expectancy of a bolt from the deep was happily over. It was a glorious spring day; the warm, radiant sun of Egypt gave us a fitting welcome.

The stay in Alexandria of the Bagdad Party was short. Orders came through from headquarters that we were to proceed to Suez by rail as soon as possible to join a waiting troopship there. That night there

many tender leave-takings in quiet secluded spots on the upper deck of the *Malwa*. During our days' journey from Taranto the Australians on board had proved themselves to be as deadly effective as they are in war. But now had come the ending of the ways, with the pain and bitterness of separation. Perhaps a kindly Fate may reunite some of these sundered ones, but for many that can never

At least three of those bright, cheery Australian soldiers sleep in soldiers' graves beneath the soil of Egypt, far from their own South Land and from the friends to whom they plighted their troth that last night in the harbour of Alexandria beneath the Egyptian sky.

General Byron, his orderly officer, and myself left the same evening for Cairo en route for Suez. Next

day we had time to obtain a fleeting glimpse of the Pyramids take tea at Shepheards', and be held to ransom by an energetic British matron who ordered us to "stand and deliver" in the name of some philanthropic institution which had not the remotest connection with the War or any suffering arising out of the War. The General furnished the soft answer that turneth away wrath, and with that, plus a small contribution for supplying wholly unnecessary blankets to the aboriginal inhabitants of some tropical country, we were allowed to retain the remainder of our spare cash and to continue our journey in the Land of Egypt.

## CHAPTER II

### EGYPT TO THE PERSIAN GULF

Afloat in an insect-house—Captain Kettle in command—Overcrowding and small-pox—The s.s. *Tower of Babel*—A sharp scare—Koweit.

FORTY-EIGHT hours after disembarking at Alexandria we were steaming down the Gulf of Suez on board a second transport bound for the Persian Gulf.

It would be difficult to imagine a greater contrast than that between the vessel which brought us across the Mediterranean and the one that was now carrying us towards the portals of the Middle East. The latter was a decrepit steamer, indescribably filthy, which had been running in the China trade for a quarter of a century. Though favoured by the mildest of weather, the old tub groaned in every joint as she thumped her way down the Red Sea towards the Indian Ocean. Long overdue for the scrap-heap, when the war broke out she was turned into a transport, and thenceforth carried cargoes of British troops instead of Chinese coolies. Her decks and upper works were thickly encrusted with dirt, the careful hoarding of years; and a paint-brush had not touched her for generations. Her cabins were so many entomological museums where insect life

flourished. In the worm-eaten recesses of the wood-work lurked colonies of parasites gathered from every corner of the globe, fighting for the principle of self-determination of small nations. The bathroom door, held in place by a single rusty hinge, hung at a drunken angle, and the inflow pipe of the bath was choked with rust. At night, as you slept in your bunk, playful mice, by way of establishing friendly relations, would nibble at your big toe, and a whole family of cockroaches would attempt new long-distance-sprinting records up and down the bedclothes.

The Captain of the ship was a sharp-featured ferret-eyed individual who sometimes wore a collar. No one knew his exact nationality, but he bore a tolerable resemblance to Cutcliffe Hyne's immortal "Captain Kettle." Indeed, he was said to cultivate this resemblance by every means in his power. He had a pointed, unshaven chin; he wore a much-faded uniform cap tilted over one ear. On the bridge you would see him with hands thrust deep in his trouser pockets and chewing a cigar. As master of a tramp, he had nosed his way into almost every port in both hemispheres. He had traded from China to Peru, and along the Pacific Coast of America. In his wanderings he had acquired a Yankee accent and a varied and picturesque polyglot vocabulary which, when the floodgates of his wrath were opened, he turned with telling effect upon his Lascar crew or his European officers. He was a man of moods and



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strange oaths, a good seaman with a marked taste for poker and magazine literature of the cheap sensational kind.

Such, then, was our ship, and such its skipper! When we had arrived at Suez, where we embarked, there were several cases of smallpox amongst its Lascar firemen. The Embarkation Officer had feared infection, and had hesitated to send us on board; but he was overruled by a higher authority somewhere in Egypt or England. There was no other transport available, it was said; the units for India and for Persia were urgently needed; and, smallpox or no smallpox, sail we must—and did.

The ship was terribly overcrowded. The Indian troops “pigged it” aft; the British troops were accommodated in the hold; and those of the officers who were unable to find quarters elsewhere unstrapped their camp bed and slept on deck. Fortunately it was the cool season in the Red Sea; the days were warm, but not uncomfortably so; and the nights were sharp and bracing, the head-wind which we carried with us all the way to Aden keeping the thermometer from climbing beyond the normal.

Once clear of Suez everybody settled down to work, a very useful relief to the discomforts of life on an overcrowded transport. Youthful subalterns joining the Indian Army set themselves to study Hindustani grammars and vocabularies with the valiant intention of acquiring colloquial proficiency before they even sighted Bombay. Members of the

Bagdad Party, stimulated by this exhibition of industry, tackled Persian and Russian. We had two officers who offered themselves as teachers of the language of Iran—Lieutenant Akhbar, a native-born Persian whose English home was at Manchester, and Captain Cooper of the Dorsets, who had studied Oriental tongues in England, and had been wounded at Gallipoli in a hand-to-hand fight with the Turks.

For Russian also there was no lack of teachers, the Russian officers, Captain Eve, and I taking charge of classes. In my own section, elementary Russian, I had twenty-two N.C.O.s' as eager and willing pupils. The majority were Australians, and, although dismayed at first by the bizarre appearance of the unfamiliar characters, and the seemingly unsurmountable difficulties of what one Anzac aptly described as "this upside-down language," they put their backs into it with very remarkable results, plodding away at their lessons hour after hour with unwearying zeal. Some had picked up a smattering of "Na Poo" French on the Western Front; a few spoke French fairly well; but the majority knew no foreign language at all; yet the quick alert Australian brain captured the entire Russian alphabet in forty-eight hours after beginning the preliminary assault.

I have sometimes thought since that to the Gods on High our ship must have appeared a sort of floating Tower of Babel, so intent on speaking strange tongues were each and all.

Before we reached the Indian Ocean, one of the

ship's officers disappeared in a mysterious manner. He was missed from the bridge at midnight and, although diligent search was made, no trace of him was ever found, and it had to be assumed that he had jumped or fallen overboard. Our Goanese stewards who were Christians looked upon this incident with the greatest misgivings. Knowing the superstitions of the Lascar crew, they secretly felt that the missing officer had been thrown overboard by some of them to placate a huge shark that had been following the ship for days. The Lascars have a great dread of such company at sea. To their untutored minds this voracious brute following a vessel foretells death to someone on board; so better a sacrificial victim than perhaps one of themselves!

Personally, I do not think for a moment that Lascar superstition was responsible for the disappearance of the missing man, nor that these people are given to the propitiation of the Man-Eaters of the Red Sea. But when, two nights later, one of the Lascars vanished as mysteriously as had the ship's officer, and this too in calm weather, it looked as if some Evil Spirit had found a place on board. Stewards and crew now became terrified. The former would not venture alone on the deck at night, and the Lascars, sorely puzzled over the fate of their comrade, went about their work in fear and trembling.

This dread of the mysterious and the unseen became contagious and affected others outside the ship's company. Subalterns who had been sleeping

on hammocks slung close to the ship's rail and whose courage had been proved on many a field, now decided that, shark worship or no shark worship, they would be safer elsewhere, and transferred themselves to the 'tween decks. Anyhow, the Sea Demon must by this time have been satisfied, for we lost no more of our personnel.

We arrived off Koweit in the Gulf of Persia on March 1st, seventeen days after leaving Suaz.

Koweit, or Kuwet, is an important seaport on the Arabian side at the south-west angle of the Persian Gulf, about eighty miles due south of Basra, our port of destination. Kuwet is the diminutive form of Kut, a common term in Irak for a walled village, and the port lies in the south side of a bay twenty miles long and five miles wide. Seen through our glasses it did not seem a prepossessing place, for the bare stony desert stretched away for miles behind the town. Yet only by accident had it escaped greatness. In 1850 General Chesny, who knew these parts by heart, recommended it as the terminus of his proposed Euphrates Valley Railway; and, when the extension of the Anatolian Railway to Bagdad and the Gulf was mooted, Koweit was long regarded as a possible terminus. But the War altered all that, and it is doubtful now if Koweit, which lives by its sea commerce alone, will even achieve the distinction of becoming the terminal point of a branch line of the railway which is destined to link up two continents.

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The Turks and Germans have long had their eyes open to the great possibilities of Koweit. The former in 1898 attempted a military occupation, but were warned off by the British, and abandoned their efforts to obtain a foothold in this commercial outpost of the Gulf, while the ruling Sheikh was sagacious enough to be aware of the danger of Turkish absorption, and to avert it by placing his dominions under the protection of Great Britain. The German-subsidized Hamburg-Amerika Line made an eleventh hour attempt to capture the trade of the Gulf, and in the months immediately preceding the War devoted special attention to Koweit and Basra trade, carrying freight at rates which must have meant a heavy financial loss. It was all part of the German *Welt-politik* to oust us from these lucrative markets of the Middle East, and to secure for German shipping a monopoly of the Gulf carrying trade. With the German-controlled Bagdad Railway approaching completion, one shudders to realize what would have been our fate economically, if the sea-borne trade of Basra and Koweit had passed under the flag and into the hands of the enterprising Hun.

Basra lies about eighty miles to the north of Koweit. It is here that the Shatt el Arab (literally the river of the Arabs, or, otherwise, the commingled Euphrates and Tigris) empties itself into the Persian Gulf. Vessels with a greater draught than nineteen feet cannot easily negotiate the bar. Our own transport was bound for Bombay, so it was with a feeling

of thankfulness that we quitted her for ever and were transferred to a British India liner, the *Erinrumpy*, which since the beginning of the War has been used as a hospital ship. She was spick and span, and the general air of cleanliness was so marked after the filthy tub that had conveyed us from Suez that we trod her decks and ventured into her cabins with an air of apologetic timidity.

It was half a day's run up river to Basra. Next morning we were speeding along with the swirling brown waters of the Shatt el Arab lapping our counter, the land of Iran on our right, and that of Irak on our left. It grew warmer, and there was a good deal of moisture in the air. The low flat shores, cut up by irrigation canals, were covered by date-palm groves. Dhows and other strange river craft, laden with merchandise, dotted the surface of the brown waters, and the glorious green of the fore-shores was a welcome relief to eyes tired of the arid sterility of the Arabian shore. A few miles below Basra we steered a careful course, passing the sunken hulls of two Turkish gunboats which the enemy had submerged in the fairway in the hope of blocking the river channel and preventing the victorious British maritime and war flotillas from reaching Basra. Like most other operations undertaken by the Turks the effort was badly bungled, and the channel was left free to our ships.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CITY OF SINBAD

Arrival at Basra—A city of filth—Transformation by the British  
—Introducing sport to the natives—The Arabs and the cinema.

BASRA or Busra, the Bastra of Marco Polo, and for ever linked with the adventures of Sinbad the Sailor, is one of the most important ports of Asiatic Turkey, and sits on the right bank of the Shatt el Arab a short distance below the confluence of the Tigris and the Euphrates.

It is built on low-lying marshy land where the malarial mosquito leads an energetic and healthy life. Basra proper is about a mile from the river, up a narrow and malodorous creek, and when the tide is out the mud of this creek cries out in strange tongues. The natives, however, seem to thrive upon its nauseating vapours. It is at once the source of their water supply and the receptacle for sewerage. In this delectable spot, as indeed throughout Asiatic Turkey and Persia, sanitary science is still unborn, and the streets are the dumping-ground for refuse.

The long, narrow bellem, with its pointed prow, in general appearance not unlike a gondola, is the chief means of communication between the Shatt

el Arab and Basra itself. If the tide is low, the Arab in charge poles up or down stream, and when you arrive at your destination you generally pick your way through festering mud to the landing-place.

One's first feelings are of wonder and bewilderment that the entire population has not long ago been wiped out by disease. Going up and down stream at low tide I have seen Arab women rinsing the salad for the family meal side by side with others dealing with the family washing. Then the bellem boy, thirsty, would lean over the side of the craft, scoop up a handful or two of the water, and drink it. As successors to the dirty and lazy Turk the British in occupation of Basra have set themselves to remedy this state of affairs, but it is uphill work. Manners and customs of centuries are not easily laid aside, and your Asiatic sniffs suspiciously at anything labelled Sanitary Reform, while the very mention of the word Hygiene sounds to him like blasphemy against the abominations with which he loves to surround himself. The Turk never bothered his head whether the inhabitants lived in unhealthy conditions. When an epidemic broke out and carried off a certain proportion of the population, the Turkish Governor would bow his head in meek resignation before the inscrutable will of Allah.

The architecture of Basra is of a distinctly primitive type. The houses are built chiefly of sun-dried bricks, and the roofs are flat, covered with mud laid



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over rafters of date-wood and surrounded by a low parapet.

Basra had been used as the British base for the advance against the Turks on the Tigris. From here had been rationed the army and the guns that reconquered Kut and opened the difficult road to Bagdad. The magician's wand of the British soldier-wallah wrought wonders in the place. Malarial swamps were filled in, and hospitals and administrative buildings erected. Wharves equipped with giant cranes sprang into being on the quayside, and, as we were landed, the busy river scene, with fussy tugs towing huge laden barges, and the quayside packed with transports, irresistibly recalled some populous port in the Antipodes or Britain itself, rather than the seaside capital of a vilayet in Asiatic Turkey.

That Basra had a great future in store for it as a shipping centre was early recognized by Major-General Sir George McMunn, who for some time held the post of Inspector-General of Lines of Communications at Basra. He was one of those rare soldiers with a genius for organization and a capacity for bringing to bear upon big problems a wide range of outlook, and he was never hampered by those military trammels which often mar the professional soldier and make a good general an exceedingly bad civil administrator. So General McMunn set to work to give Basra an impetus along the path of commercial progress. He planned a model city

which was to include residential and business sites, electric tramways, modern hotels, and public parks. It was a stupendous undertaking, but McMunn accomplished much in the face of great financial difficulties. He endowed Basra with a first-class hotel run by a chef and an hotel staff recruited from London, installed electric light, gave the evil-smelling town a vigorous spring-cleaning, and with stone quarried in Arabia buried beneath stout paving the slimy mud of some of the Basra streets.

Ashar which fronts the Shatt el Arab is really the business centre of Basra. Its bazaars running parallel with Basra Creek are dark, evil-smelling, and overcrowded by human bipeds who swarm about ant fashion, and are born, live, and die in these purlieus.

In the course of an hour during the busy part of the day you can count on meeting representatives of all the races and creeds of Asia in the streets and bazaars of Ashar or lower Basra. Here ebbs and flows the flotsam of the East—Jews, Arabs, Armenians, Kurds, Persians, Chaldeans (merchants or traffickers these!), and coolies from India, Burma, and China, with wanderers from the remote khanates of Russian Turkestan, the latter in quaint headdress and wearing sheepskin coats whose vicinity is rather trying to sensitive noses when the thermometer is well above eighty in the shade.

General Byron, with Major Newcombe of the Canadian Contingent, Captain Eve, some other members of our party, and myself were quartered in

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the old Turkish cavalry barracks, while the remainder went into camp at Makina, two miles out. The Turks, it is true, were gone never to return, but in the honeycombed recesses of the crumbling dust-covered walls of Ashar barracks their troopers had left behind many old friends who, from the very first, displayed an envenomed animosity towards us, and attacked British officers and men with a vigour which the Turkish Army itself had never excelled. Every night raiding parties, defying alike our protective mosquito nets and the poison-gas effect of Keating's, found their way into our beds; and every morning we would crawl from between the sheets bearing visible marks of these night forays.

It is always said, and generally believed, that the British signalize their occupation of a country by laying down a cricket pitch and building a church. They did all these things and more at Basra. There was a garrison church, a simple building with a special care for the temperature of a Gulf Sunday. There were several sports clubs, and one at Makina, which might be called the suburb of Ashar, had good tennis courts. Beyond, in the desert, was a racecourse where the local Derby and Grand National were run off.

The ordinary native of Iran and of the "Land of the Two Rivers" has not hitherto shown any marked taste for either mild or violent physical exercise. But Basra, I found, was a noted exception to this, and youth of the place were badly bitten by the

nia. As the doctors would say, "the read with alarming rapidity, and spared young nor old." After a few weeks devoted to up points as spectators at "soccer" a native team would secure possession of a battered football and start work, "Basra trying conclusions with "Ashar Bazaar," for

The rules were neither Rugby nor Association a local extemporization of both; and the not the classic costume of the British foot-

but a medley of all the garbs of Asia. Arabs in long flowing robes, suffering from long sports fever, would forget their dignity of running after a football and trying

. Chaldean Christian would mingle with Jew and Mussulman. Individual players received the kick intended for the ball. Indeed this would have led to racial trouble and bloodshed, but as a rule these slight deviations from the strict football code were accepted in the best possible spirit, being regarded no doubt as the game itself.

These things did not always run so smoothly. At times the ball was entirely lost sight of, and the game was abandoned in some corner of the field,

and the players would resolve themselves into an un-Asian congress on the ethics of games in general. Everyone spoke at once and in his own way. On such occasions a passing British soldier would be summoned to assist at the deliberations,

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and in "*Na Poo*" *Arabic* would straighten out the tangle. Then play would be resumed, everybody bowing to the superior wisdom of the soldier sahib, and accepting his decision unquestioningly.

The youth of Basra, more precocious than their elders, converted the streets of Ashar into a playing-ground where tip-cat, bat and ball, marbles, diabolo, and sundry other forms of juvenile recreation found eager devotees at all hours of the day in narrow streets generally crowded with army transport.

The cinema also exercised a great influence on the native mind. Never quite understanding its working, he accepted it all philosophically as part of the travelling outfit of that strange race of infidels from far away who had chased the Turks from the shores of the Arabian Sea, who seemed to be able to make themselves into birds at will, and who rushed over the roadless desert in snorting horseless carriages. Men such as these were capable of anything, and when the first cinema film arrived, the Arabs filled to overflowing the ramshackle building which served as a theatre. In Basra I often went to the cinema, not so much for the show itself as to watch the joy with which that primitive child of nature, the Arab, followed the mishaps and triumphs of the hero through three reels. How they were moved to tears by his sufferings! And how they shouted with joy when the villain of the piece was hoist by his own petard and his career of rascality abruptly and fittingly terminated!"

One thing, I found on talking to some of these native onlookers, puzzled their minds exceedingly, and that was the morals and manners of European women as shown on the screen. The Arab is a fervent stickler for the conventionalities, and it was a great shock to his religious scruples to see women promenading in low-necked dresses with uncovered faces, frequenting restaurants with strange men not their husbands, and imbibing strong drink. "The devil must be kept busy in Faringistan taking all these shameless creatures into the bottomless pit!" said one Arab to me, when I asked him what he thought of the cinema. It was useless to seek to explain that cinema scenes did not represent the real life of the Englishman or the American, and that all our women do not earn thier living as cinema artists.

In Basra I never saw a Mohammedan woman frequenting a cinema performance. Even had she won over her husband's consent to such an innovation, public opinion would veto her presence there, and she would not be permitted to look upon this devil's machine illustrating foreign "wickedness."

## CHAPTER IV

### AT A PERSIAN WEDDING

Visit to the Sheikh of Mohammerah—A Persian banquet.

A FEW miles below Basra, on the Persian shore, at the point where the Karun River joins the Shatt el Arab, are the semi-independent dominions of the Sheikh of Mohammerah. His territory is part and parcel of the moribund Persian Empire, but the Sheikh has long held independent sway, and has ruled his little kingdom with Oriental grandeur and benevolent despotism. He is a firm and convinced friend of the British, and even at the darkest hour of our military fortunes in the Gulf, when it seemed as if we might be driven from the lower Tigris itself, the Sheikh was proof against Turkish intrigue and the corrupting influence of Hun gold.

His Excellency the Khazal Khan, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., to give him his full title, like most Persian potentates in the tottering, crumbling Empire of Iran, where the writ of the present "King of Kings" does not run beyond the walls of Teheran, held undisputed sway over his little state, and his authority was enforced by a nondescript army of retainers. But he was a

generous host, a firm friend, and an unforgiving enemy.

One week-end while at Basra I was one of a few British officers invited to assist at the elaborate festivities which precede a Persian marriage. The contemplated matrimonial alliance was intended to unite the family of the Sheikh and that of Haji Reis, his Grand Vizier or Prime Minister. In the small party that dropped down the river on one of His Majesty's gunboats, were the Admiral of the Station, one or two generals, the Political Officer, the liaison officer between the Indian Government and the ruler of Mohammerah, and my friend Akhbar, a Persian from Manchester who had joined up early in the War. As we dropped down stream past the Palace, a salute was fired in our honour by the Sheikh's artillerymen with a couple of old six-pounders. An antediluvian Persian gunboat dipped her ensign as we steamed past. It was the first time I had seen a warship or indeed any other vessel flying the Persian flag, and I regarded her with interest. Akhbar, who despite his British uniform and his long residence amongst us, remained always an ardent Persian, professed to be very much hurt by some chance observations of mine directed at the river gunboat and the Persian navy in general.

The Palace was a rectangular building, with stuccoed front, standing back from the water and approached by a winding stone staircase. On landing we were received by the chief dignitaries of the



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place with the Grand Vizier at their head. There was much bowing and salaaming, and it was here that I first made acquaintance with that elaborate code of official and social ceremony which surrounds every act of one's life in Persia. A guard of honour from the Sheikh's household troops made a creditable attempt to present arms as we stepped ashore. More soldiers lined the stairway leading to the reception room. They wore a variety of uniforms, and were armed with everything in the way of rifles, from antiquated Sniders to modern Mausers and Lee-Enfields. Like most of the irregulars that we encountered in Persia afterwards, they fairly bristled with bandoliers stuffed full of cartridges. A Persian on the war-path, be he tribal chief or simple armed follower, is generally a walking arsenal. He is full of lethal weapons which nearly always include a rifle of some kind and a short stabbing sword with an inlaid hilt. He often displays a Mauser pistol as well, and usually carries enough ammunition hung round him to equip a decent-sized small-arms factory.

The Sheikh himself received us in the main reception hall, which was covered with rare Persian carpets, any single one of which would be worth a small fortune in London. The Prime Minister and his son, we found, spoke excellent English, and the former, who was wearing the conventional frock coat of the Occident, but no shirt collar, presented each visitor in turn to our Arab host, a man just past

middle life with all the stately grace and dignity of his Bedouin forebears. He was dressed in native costume; his manners were easy and full of charm. He had a dark, olive-tinted face, black beard and wonderful lustrous black eyes. A strict adherent of the Shi'ite sect, and an abstainer from strong drink himself, he was, nevertheless, not averse to supplying it to his Western guests. The Grand Vizier during his sojourn in Europe had evidently studied our customs and civilization *au fond*. Apart from a knowledge of the English language and literature, he had brought back with him a fine and discriminating taste in the matter of aperitifs, knew to a nicety the component parts of a Martini cocktail, and was a profound connoisseur of Scotch whisky. Our party had few dull moments with the Grand Vizier as cicerone, and our admiration for his versatility rose by leaps and bounds.

The dinner was *à la fourchette*. It is not always so in hospitable Persia where, as a rule, host and guests sit in a circle on the floor and help themselves with the aid of their fingers. Here everything had been arranged in European fashion, and the long table was topped by a rampart of specially prepared dishes with a lavishness that was truly Oriental. It is a Persian custom to supply five times more food than one's guests can possibly consume. What remains becomes the perquisite of the servants of the household.

According to Persian etiquette a son may not sit

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down in the presence of his father, so the bridegroom-elect had no place at the board, and his active participation in the banquet was limited to carrying out the duties of chief butler and waiting upon the guests. It was hot and exhausting work, in the intervals of which he liberally helped himself from a black bottle which stood on a table behind the Grand Vizier's chair. Barefooted servitors passed nimbly along the table, and saw to it that their master's guests wanted for nothing. A plate was emptied only to be speedily replenished.

We saw nothing of the bride-to-be. She played but a minor part in the evening's entertainment. Nor were any other women of the household to be seen. At one end of the banqueting hall was a heavily curtained aperture. Occasionally this was furtively drawn aside an inch or two, and a woman's veiled face would appear for an instant, and as quickly disappear. It was the private view allowed to the bride and her girl friends.

The menu was inordinately long. Dish succeeded dish, and eat we must unless we wished to cause dire offence to our host. He himself, seated at the middle of the table, ate sparingly and drank but water, his air of quiet impassivity giving place to a smile from time to time as he listened to some Persian *bon mot* or other from one of his neighbours.

The Sheikh excelled as a host. No sooner was the banquet at an end than he told us that a display of

fireworks had been arranged in our honour. Seats had been placed for the visitors on the long veranda at the back of the palace and facing the extensive grounds. No Persian feast is held to be complete without a pyrotechnic display of some kind, and that organized for our pleasure would have done credit to the best efforts of Brock or Pain.

There were Catherine-wheels, rockets, and welcoming mottoes in Persian and English which flared up merrily, until the whole grounds were one blaze of light.

The retainers entered fully into the spirit of the affair. Clad in fireproof suits, they were hung round with squibs which were set alight, and then the human Catherine-wheels carried out an astonishing series of somersaults, to the intense delight of the native portion of the audience. An English gunnery instructor, aided by native workmen with material from the Sheikh's arsenal, had been responsible for the pyrotechnic part of the entertainment.

In the meantime the banqueting hall had been cleared, and presently we were conducted thither, where, to the strains of a Persian orchestra, native dancing boys showed their skill in a series of emotional and highly sensuous gyrations. These youths were of a distinctly effeminate appearance in their long flowing Persian robes, and there was a look of brazen abandon in their more than suggestive evolutions as they whirled round and round on the floor.

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To these succeeded a quartette of Armenian girls in bright-hued raiment and low-necked dresses, their bare bosoms covered with cheap jewellery, their hair and costumes studded with glittering sequins, and their ankles encircled by gilt metal bracelets giving them an air of tawdriness and unspeakable vulgarity. Their movements were graceful, with a certain artistic crudeness. To the clash of cymbals, and with a jingling of their sequins and anklets, two would whirl round the dancing hall, until sheer physical exhaustion compelled them to seek a temporary respite on a divan; whereupon they would be succeeded on the floor by the other pair who had been awaiting their turn. This dancing by relays went on until the early hours of the morning, and we began to be alarmed lest it should continue for the duration of the War. Etiquette forbade us to leave, so we did our best and stuck it out to the end. In the tobacco-laden atmosphere, with the temperature distinctly sultry, and the windows hermetically sealed I made a desperate but ineffectual attempt to fight off drowsiness. At last I succumbed and dreamt that I was in the Paradise of Mahomet listening to the music of the houris entertaining some of the newly arrived Faithful.

I woke with a start, for someone had prodded me in the ribs and told me it was time to go, and by a swift transition I found myself back at Mohammerah and our party bidding adieu to our kindly host and his Grand Vizier.

It was too dark to attempt the passage of the river back to Basra, so we crossed over to the house of Mr. Lincoln of the British Consulate on the right bank of the Karun river and spent the remainder of the night under his hospitable roof.

## CHAPTER V

### UP THE TIGRIS TO KUT

Work of the river flotilla—Thames steamboats on the Tigris—  
The waterway through the desert—The renaissance of  
Amarah—The river's jazz-step course—The old Kut and the  
new—In Townshend's old headquarters—Turks' monument  
to short-lived triumph.

OUR stay at Ashar barracks was of brief duration. A week after landing in Basra we received orders from General Headquarters to proceed to Bagdad immediately, but steamer accommodation was limited, and it was found impossible to embark the whole of our party at once. However, a compromise was effected with the Local Embarkation Officer, and place was found on an up-river steamer for our first contingent, consisting of General Byron, twenty-four other officers (of whom I was one), and forty N.C.O's.

Our transport was an antiquated paddle steamer, broad of beam, and the whole of her one deck was packed with troops bound for up-river like ourselves. In addition, she towed, moored on either side, two squat barges filled with troops and supplies.

The navigation of the Tigris, even in peace time,

when the river is unencumbered, is a hazardous undertaking. Its lower reaches are flat and winding, and when it is in flood the banks are submerged. The stream follows an erratic course, occasionally striking out on an entirely fresh one, and the search for the new channel is often attended with disaster for the daring river mariner. Yet up and down the stream between Kut and Basra British seamen have zigzagged their way by sheer pluck and perseverance, dumping down men and supplies at the advanced base with unfailing regularity. The admirable part played by these river skippers of the Tigris has never been told, and so has never been properly appreciated by their countrymen at home. Day and night they toiled to hurry up the needed reinforcements to the hard-pressed battle line in Mesopotamia, and to feed the army that was driving the Turk from the "Land of the Two Rivers." Drawn from all parts of the Empire, they worthily represented the pluck, courage, and unyielding tenacity of the British race. Had it not been for the river skippers of the Tigris, shy, unostentatious men, sparing of speech and indifferent to praise, the Mesopotamian Campaign must have ended abortively; Kut could never have been retaken, and the Turks would still have been in Bagdad.

The despatches of victorious generals in Mesopotamia have been full of references to valuable aid and service rendered by units and individuals, but, it seems to me, they have entirely overlooked the



great contribution of the men of the Tigris River Flotilla, who have apparently been left without reward or recognition.

In the waterway of the Shatt el Arab itself, and before we entered the Tigris proper, we passed scores of river craft. There were dhows laden to the gunwale with river produce being carried swiftly down by the current towards Basra market. Here was an antiquated sternwheeler with her lashed barges alongside, like an old woman with parcels tucked under her arms, going to the base to load up supplies. And, most wonderful of all, here was a London County Council steamer, the *Christopher Wren*, which had abandoned the Thames for the Tigris and the carrying of happy trippers from Blackfriars to Kew for the transporting of Mr. Thomas Atkins and his kit part of the long river journey towards Bagdad. Some of the Tommies on our steamer eyed her enviously. Here was a touch of the far-distant homeland under Eastern skies! There was a suspicion of a tear in some sentimental eyes, but the wag of the party scored a laugh when he megaphoned with his hands to the skipper of the *Wren*, "I'm for Battersea, I am!"

A number of these L.C.C. boats had come out from London under their own steam, making the long voyage to the Gulf and Basra through the Bay of Biscay and across the Mediterranean and Red Seas, buffeted by wind and wave, but without losing any of their personnel or suffering any material

damage. It was a triumph of seamanship and British pluck.

The banks of the Tigris, and indeed of the Euphrates, at certain seasons of the year are surely the most desolate places on the habitable earth. The date-palm plantations of the Shatt el Arab are succeeded by a monotonous landscape of dull brown desert stretching away as far as the eye can see. To our right, as we wound and twisted our way up river, we occasionally caught a glimpse of the snow-clad mountains of Persia. Dotted here and there along the banks are Arab villages, which seemed to be a conglomeration of goats, sheep, and dusky-brown naked children, all thrown confusedly into the picture. By way of variation, now and then we swept past a desert oasis, where stood a few stunted palm-trees near which a tribe of nomads had set up their black tents of goat's-hair and were spending a week-end on the river bank before trekking afresh into the heart of the desert.

Your real Arab nomad is essentially a child of nature. He spends his life in the wilderness and has a rooted objection—nay, it is, in truth, a positive terror—to visiting any town, big or little. He has an undefinable dread of venturing within a walled city, apparently regarding it in much the same way as a wild bird would regard an iron-barred cage. Any restriction of movement is irksome to him. He loves the free life of the desert, with its limitless possibilities, its far-stretching horizon, and its absence

of streets and houses. He is of the tribe of Ishmael, destined to wander on and on, ever remote from the haunts of his fellow-man.

The semi-nomad, on the other hand, is less intractable, and does not chafe so much under the yoke of Western civilization. He is frugal, sober, and thrifty. We passed hundreds of his tribe who live on the banks of the Tigris, cultivating a patch of arable land, and using a wooden plough which must have been old-fashioned even in the days of that earliest recorded agriculturist, Cain.

We groped a tedious way along the sinuous Tigris, missing by a foot or two a down-river steamer and its lashed barges, making fair headway against the swirling waters which swept past us with the speed of a millstream. The current carried us from side to side, first bumping one bank, and then cannoning against the opposite one, until it seemed as if the stout lashings of our captive barges must be torn away. Where the river was especially narrow, we would tie up to the bank and give right-of-way to a convoy going down stream. At night, too, we would either tie up or anchor inshore, and at daylight would be off again.

In the bright clear atmosphere it was possible to see objects many miles distant. Ofttimes we would catch sight of a steamer away to our right or left, looking for all the world as if she were making an overland trip and was stuck fast in the middle of the waterless desert. But the seeming mystery was

explained by the winding course of the river, which can only be likened to a series of figures of eight.

It took us about thirty hours to reach Amarah, which lies on both banks of the Tigris and, by reason of its position, had become an important coaling-centre on the lower part of the stream. There was an air of bustle and activity about the place, for British organization had descended upon it and rudely awakened it from the sleep of centuries. British military and native police controlled the town, and kept the more mischievous of the unruly Arab elements in order. A swing-bridge had been thrown across the river to carry vehicular traffic. River steamers were moored at the quays, taking in or discharging cargo, and Indian and Arab coolies sweated in the sun as they hurried along with great burdens on their backs.

Our way to camp led through the Bazaar, which may, I think, lay claim to be one of the filthiest and most malodorous in all the "Land of the Two Rivers." It had rained heavily the previous night, and now the unpaved roadway through the main bazaar was a foot deep in liquid mud. The average native was wholly unconcerned and, while we picked our steps carefully, mentally consigning Amarah and its abominable streets to perdition, barefooted Arab women, wearing anklets of silver, with a pendant through one nostril, and in their finest raiment, would plod contentedly through this mire as if it were a rose-bestrewn path. Tiny mites with no more clothing than a

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string of beads gave each other mud baths with the joy and enthusiasm of children sporting in the sea at some European watering-place.

Still, if Amarah disgusted us with its muddy streets and evil-smelling bazaars, it had some compensating advantages, amongst them its British Officers' Club. In a desert of dirt and discomfort this was a veritable oasis, with its excellent cuisine, and smoking and reading rooms provided with the latest three-months-old newspapers and magazines. It stands on the river front, and from its roof-garden a fine panorama opens at one's feet. In the foreground are the busy river and the crowded quayside, and on the opposite bank the white tents of the British camps blend with the dark green of the date-palms. Still farther beyond, as a background to the picture, is the dun-brown of the desert wastes.

A wet camp is at all times an abomination, and our first night at Amarah was not a pleasant experience. The transit camp is on a sort of peninsula, and a few hours' rain converted it into a lake of mud. We were housed in huts whose shape recalled a miniature Crystal Palace, and whose semi-circular sides and roof were thatched with palm netting. In the hut which I shared with Major Newcombe and Captain Eve, during the early hours of the morning a heavy shower poured through the roof as if it were a sieve. In the darkness there was a scramble over the muddy floor in quest of waterproof sheets and raincoats with which to set up a second line of defence for

our leaky roof. Afterwards we all laughed heartily at the experience, but at the time we were inclined to be wrathful, for an unexpected and unlooked-for shower-bath in bed at 2 a.m., even on active service, may ruffle the mildest of tempers.

From Amarah to Kut we went by river, the journey occupying three days. The military-constructed railway which has since been opened does the journey in ten or twelve hours. Our steamer, No. 95, was a comfortable one of her class for Tigris river travelling. Indeed in this part of the world she would be listed as *de luxe*, inasmuch as she possessed cabin accommodation and actually had a bathroom. The trip itself was but a slight variation of the monotonous river journey to Amarah. There were the same flat stretches of country now and again relieved by a few palm-trees; the white tents of a British river guard, a link in this long-drawn-out line of communications; or some Arab village with its grouping of dilapidated palm-roofed huts, its barking curs, and its mud-brown naked children. Occasionally down by the banks there was a fringe of green where some native cultivator, aided by the water from an irrigation canal, was rearing a hardy spring crop.

As on its lower reaches, the river pursued a devious path across the face of the country until one grew giddy with attempting to follow its windings. The Tigris is a most impulsive stream; it obeys no will but its own, and is as erratic as any river of its size in the world. However, as Kut is approached on the

up journey, it broadens out into noble proportions, swift and deep, and for a few miles behaves rationally, abandoning its geographical jazz-step over the Mesopotamian plains.

Kut—the scene of Townshend's immortal stand, with his handful of troops diminished daily by famine and disease, holding off to the last a powerful enemy—is situated at the end of a tongue of land at a point where the Tigris, taking a mighty sweep, mingles its waters with those of the Shatt el Ilai.

But a new Kut, a British Kut, a town of tents and wooden huts and galvanized iron buildings, has sprung into being three miles below the tottering walls of Turkish Kut, and about two miles from Townshend's advanced trench line. In British Kut there are rough wooden piers, hastily built, it is true, where the river steamers moor, few attempting the difficult passage from Kut to Bagdad. Kut is also an important railway junction, for the troops bound up river were disembarked here, and stepped from the steamer deck into the waiting troop-trains.

We went up river in a motor launch, General Byron, Major Newcombe, Captain Eve, and myself, to visit Townshend's famous stronghold. It was with a feeling of emotion that we disembarked at the old stone pier of Kut, and made our way along its broken unpaved streets, past its crumbling wall, to the centre of the town. The route led through the main business centre—it could hardly be called a bazaar—where merchants and money-changers plied

their trades, and a blind beggar in rags sat under the lee of a wall, with the sun shining full on his sightless eye-sockets, droning a supplication for alms. The wave of red war had passed and repassed over Kut, leaving it scorched and maimed. Turk and Briton had fought for supremacy round and about it, but that was more than a year ago, and Kut now dozed sleepily in the hot afternoon sun, beginning already to forget the past and, with the calm philosophic indifference of the East, accepting as a predestined part of its daily life the Standard of Britain which had replaced the Crescent of the Turk.

The Arab policemen who guarded its unkempt streets were serving their new masters faithfully, and those we passed, spick and span in spotless khaki and tarbooshes, by their alert and soldierly bearing gave unmistakable evidence of having graduated from the school of that efficient, exacting, and most conscientious of mortals, the British drill instructor.

Presently, guided by a Staff Officer from the base headquarters, we came to the house of the Hero of Kut. It was an unpretentious dwelling, flat-roofed, and built of sun-dried bricks, with nothing much to distinguish it from its hundreds of neighbours. Descending a steep flight of steps, we came to the Serdab or underground apartment common to most Mesopotamian houses, where the occupants hide for shelter during the hottest hours of the blistering summer day. The room was bare of adornment—a few chairs, a divan, and a table covered with official



papers—that was all. It was now the home of the local Political Officer, but it had changed little, if any, since its former illustrious occupant walked out of it and up those stone steps—his proud spirit unbroken, his heart heavy, but his courage undimmed—to pass a captive into the hands of the Turks.

None of our party could lay any special claim to be sentimental but, standing there in the narrow underground room with its hallowed associations, where a very gallant British General, the foe without and disease and hunger within—he, too, alas! another victim of high-placed incompetency—planned and schemed during those dark days of the siege to break the throttling grip of the Turk, we felt we were upon holy ground, and every one of us, moved by a common emotion, raised our hands to our caps in salute. It was our tribute of admiration and respect for Townshend and his heroes—for the men who perished so nobly, no less than for their comrades maimed and broken who survived the fall of Kut, many of them, unhappily, only to pass anew through the gate of suffering and to end their lives as prisoners in the hands of a brutal, ungenerous enemy to whom honour and compassion are meaningless terms.

It was not every day that the Turks could boast such a victory as Kut, or that they found themselves with a British General and a starving British force surrendering to their arms. Short-lived as was their triumph, they lost no time in celebrating it by setting up a commemorative monument. This stands on the

Tigris' bank close to British Kut and the landing pier, and is in the form of an obelisk of unhewn stone on a plinth of corresponding material fenced in by an iron railing. A few obsolete cannon, the muzzles facing outwards, are grouped round the base of the monument. An inscription in Turkish records the fall of Kut and the capture of Townshend and his men which, it recounts, was accomplished by the grace of Allah and the prowess of the besieging Turkish Army.

The next stage of our journey from Kut to Bagdad was a short one. A night in a troop-train, and sunrise the following morning saw us being dumped down at Hinaida Camp on the outskirts of the City of the Caliphs.

## CHAPTER VI

### BAGDAD

Arabian nights and motor-cars—The old and the new in Bagdad  
-- Noah's dinghy"—Bible history illustrated—At a famous  
tomb-mosque.

WHO has not heard and read of Bagdad, of its former glory and its greatness? I set foot in it for the first time on March 20th, 1918, the day after the arrival of our little party at Hinaida Transit Camp on the left bank of the Tigris.

As I tramped across the dusty Hinaida plain towards the belt of palm groves which veils the city on the east, I had visions of Haroun al Raschid, and fancied myself coming face to face with the wonders of the "Arabian Nights." It was with something of a shock, then, that on entering the city I encountered khaki-clad figures, and saw Ford vans and motor lorries tearing wildly along the streets. In the main thoroughfare, hard by British Headquarters, a steam roller was travelling backwards and forwards over the freshly metalled roadway, completing the work of an Indian Labour Corps: farther on, a watering cart labelled "Bagdad Municipality" was busily drowning the fine-spun desert dust that

had settled thickly on the newly born macadamized street. Here was an Arab café, with low benches on the inclined plane principle like seats in a theatre, where the occupants sipped their Mocha from tiny cups, or inhaled tobacco-smoke through the amber stem of a hubble-bubble, watching the passing show, and betimes discussing the idiosyncrasies of the strange race of unbelievers that has settled itself down in the fair city which once had been the pride of Islam.

Truly a city of contrasts! Cheek by jowl with the Arab café was an eating-house full of British soldiers. The principal street runs parallel with the river and, as one proceeded, it was possible to catch glimpses of pleasant gardens running down to the water's edge and embowering handsome villas—gardens where pomegranates, figs, oranges, and lemons grew in abundance. The Oriental readily adapts himself to changing circumstances, and unhesitatingly abandons the master of yesterday to follow the new one of to-day. Already traces of the Ottoman dominion were being obliterated. The Turkish language was disappearing from shop signs to be replaced by English or French, with, in some cases, a total disregard of etymology, such choice gems as "Englisch talking lessons," "Stanley Maude wash company" (this over a laundry), "British tommy shave room," showing at all events a praiseworthy attempt to wrestle with the niceties of the English language.

Bagdad as I saw it in the first days following my

flood and racing down to meet its brother, the Euphrates, on their joint way to the Gulf.

Going upstream the kellik keeps as close in shore as possible. Two men in the boat keep her from going aground, while a couple of others yoke themselves to a towline and move along the margin of the stream much like the canal barges in Holland. But on the Tigris there is no well-defined towing path, and the course resolves itself into a kind of zigzag cross-country obstacle race, and the agility and dexterity with which these muscular native rivermen harnessed to the towline of a heavily laden raft will negotiate sunken ground, canal ditches, tumble-down village walls, and a few other natural hazards on a stretch of Tigris' river-bank, is extraordinary to behold. The life of a galley slave in Carthage must have been a soft snap indeed compared with that of the dark-skinned toilers who tug at an up-river kellik under the full force of a Mesopotamian sun.

Bagdad as a city takes us back to the horizon rim of the world's history. There still clings to it an air of musty antiquity and prehistoric dirt which the efforts of its new masters, the British, with pick-and-shovel sanitary science, and other new-fangled inventions of Western civilization, have not entirely eradicated. The beardless invaders from over the seas have sought to scrape clean its ancient bones, to straighten out the kink in its narrow, tortuous, and evil-smelling streets, and to let the light of day and a little wholesome fresh air penetrate into the

gloom and dampness of its rabbit-warren of a bazaar. Staid, solemn-looking citizens, with the green turban of Mecca enveloping their venerable heads. whose ancestors probably drifted in here when overland travel was resumed after the Flood. have looked on in pious horror while festering slum areas have been laid low by British pickaxes. These Hadjis, fervent believers in tradition, and uncompromising opponents of innovation, have caressed their beards thoughtfully when confronted with the new order of things, and come to the philosophic conclusion that, as Kipling has it, "Allah created the English mad, the maddest of all mankind."

Biblical history is no longer vague and shadowy, but takes on a new meaning and an added significance to anyone who explores old Bagdad with eyes to see. As I wandered through its bazaars in quest of antiquities and bargains in bric-à-brac and rare damascened weapons, I often forgot the primary object of my visit while strolling silently about contentedly studying the hastening crowds who elbowed and fought their way along the narrow streets, or watching the complacent shopkeepers who sat cross-legged in their narrow, cell-like shops, haggling over prices with some prospective buyer. It was like throwing Biblical romance and Biblical tragedy on a cinema screen, only that now it lived and was real flesh and blood. Here were the descendants of the Jews of the Captivity—shrewd-looking, sharp-featured merchants, traffickers in gold and silver,

dealers in antiquities, a living link between that very remote yesterday and the modern to-day, amassing much wealth in the land of their perpetual exile, carrying on unbrokenly the religion and traditions of Judaism—in dress, manners, customs, and speech as unchanged and unchanging as on the day when the heavy hand of the Babylonian oppressor smote their forbears and they were led away into slavery.

And here, too, now competing in commercial rivalry with the sons of Abraham, are lineal descendants of Assyrians, Chaldeans, Medes, Persians, and of those other warring races who between them made history in the long ago.

The descendants of the Jews of the Captivity have never wandered far afield, and it would even seem that they have preferred exile to repatriation. Bagdad formed part of Babylonia, and a three hours' train journey to Hilleh on the Euphrates will land the Bagdad Jew of an archæological turn of mind amidst the ruins of ancient Babylon.

The Jew venerates Bagdad as a sort of lesser Zion. It was long the seat of the Exilarch, and is still the rallying centre of Eastern Judaism. Monuments and tombs of the mighty ones of the Chosen Race are scattered over Lower Mesopotamia. There is the reputed tomb of Ezra on the Shatt el Arab near Korna, that of Ezekiel in the village called Kefil, while the prophet Daniel has a holy well bearing his name at Hilleh near the ruins of Babylon. But the chief place of pious pilgrimage for Bagdad Jews lies

in a palm grove an hour's journey from the city on the Euphrates road. Here is said to be buried Joshua, son of Josedech, a high priest towards the end of the captivity period.

Western Bagdad, on the right bank of the Tigris, always recognizing and rendering a somewhat sullen obedience to the sway of the Turkish Sultan, is separated from Eastern Bagdad by much more than the deep waters of the river. Its inhabitants for the most part are Mohammedans of the Shi'ite sect, as opposed to the orthodox or Sunni creed of the Turks. The Shias may be described as Islamic dissenters, and their cult is the state religion of Persia. Ethnologically and politically they are closer akin to Iran than to Turkey, and their eyes are more frequently turned to Teheran than to Istambul. In Western Bagdad they have their own mosques, their own bazaars, and their own shrines, and lead lives more or less isolated from their Asiatic brethren on the opposite side of the river.

During a visit to the famous Shi'ite mosque and shrine at Kazemain, a suburb of the Western City, I found that the people, while outwardly friendly and polite, were much more fanatical than the average Sunni Mussulman, and were inclined to resent any attempt on the part of a Giaour like myself to see the interior of their mosques and shrines. I had for companions General Byron and Lieutenant Akhbar, the latter a professing Shi'ite. We crossed by the new pontoon swing bridge which now connects the



two shores, superseding the old bridge of boats of Turkish days.

The houses are huddled together, and are squat and meanly built, with the low encircling walls and roofed parapets of sun-dried mud so common to Persian villages. The streets are barely wide enough for two pedestrians to pass abreast, and are full of holes or covered with garbage. As for the inhabitants, they were miserably clad, and the few women whom we chanced to encounter in our path hastily stepped aside and, turning from us, made a furtive effort to veil themselves by covering the upper part of their faces with a dirty piece of rag produced from the voluminous folds of a sleeve-pocket.

We did not tarry here very long. Quitting this waterside hamlet we drove three miles to Kazemain itself, passing en route the terminus of the Bagdad-Anatolian Railway, that great link of steel in the chain of German world-expansion the completion of which, under the existing concession, would have been commercially and economically fatal to us in Western Asia.

The tomb-mosque of Kazemain is one of the architectural landmarks of Bagdad. Its twin domes and its four lofty minarets, all overlaid with gold, are visible for miles as the traveller approaches Bagdad from the west. When the rays of the noonday sun strike on these gilded cupolas and graceful tapering columns it enhances their beauty a hundredfold, and throws into bold relief all their harmony and

symmetry. It recalled to me vividly, but in a minor degree, some of the wonder and the glory of that other great monument of an Eastern land—the Taj Mahal at Agra. But while the one is secular and commemorative of earthly love, the other has a deeply religious significance, for in the imposing mosque of Kazemain are buried Musa Ibn Ja'far el Kazim and his grandson, Ibn Ali el Jawad, the seventh and ninth of the successors of Ali, the son-in-law of Mahomet, and recognized by the Shias as the rightful Caliphs of Islam. As a centre of pilgrimage for Shi'ite Moslems, Kazemain ranks second after Kerbela, the tomb of Hosain the Martyr; and from the point of view of sanctity, Kazemain is considered to take even higher place than either Samarra or Nejef, the other two Shi'ite shrines in the Vilayet of Bagdad.

The customary crowd of beggars, maimed, halt, and blind, whined to us as we alighted before the great gate of Kazemain Mosque. Three or four small boys, who had stolen a free ride by clinging to the back of the automobile while it crawled dead slow through the gloomy, winding streets of the bazaar, now demanded a pishkash (the Persian equivalent of backsheesh). Mollahs, Sayyeds, and other reputed holy men, springing apparently from nowhere, formed a ring around us, deeply interested in our dress, our speech, the colour of our hair, and our beardless faces. More especially was the wondering attention of the crowd concentrated on Akhbar, himself a native Persian, holding the King's commission and wearing

the King's khaki. "What manner of man is this?" asked the puzzled onlookers. "Is he Infidel or True Believer? for, by the Beard of the Prophet, he speaks our holy tongue as well as we do ourselves!"

Now there intervened an elderly personage in the Abba or flowing robes affected by the better class of Persian, with a green kamarband indicating his claim to lineal descent from the Prophet. The newcomer, whose hair and beard were plentifully dyed with henna—a never-failing sign, I was assured, of virtue and virility—offered to go in search of the Mujtahid or Chief Priest.

He returned presently with that important functionary, who salaamed, but looked at us coldly and suspiciously, I thought. A whispered colloquy now took place between himself and Akhbar. He had no doubt as to the heterodoxy of the General and myself, but, on the other hand, at first he was not convinced of the orthodoxy of Akhbar, this professed Believer clad in Infidel garb. All Akhbar's impassioned pleading failed to move him. Akhbar himself might enter freely, but as for the two Unbelievers, they must not set foot within the jealously guarded portals of the holy place.

Up to this point the negotiations had been singularly free from anything even remotely connected with coin of the realm. I think it was the Mujtahid himself who, in his most winning manner, hinted that "Blessed is he that giveth," and that even the dole of an Unbeliever might win merit in the sight

of Allah. We gave accordingly, whereupon the Mujtahid, out of the kindness of his heart, and by way of requiting our generosity, said he would enable us to see something of the Shi'ite "holy of holies." With himself as guide we were led by a circular route to a caravanserai for pilgrims which stood close to the high wall of the mosque. The place was untenanted, but, mounting by a flight of rickety stairs to the flat and somewhat unstable roof, we were able to overlook the interior courtyard of the mosque, to note its gilt façade, and to watch the worshippers performing their ablutions at the fountain in the centre of the courtyard. With this we had to be content.

The Shrine down to recent days had been a sanctuary for criminals fleeing from justice, but the Turkish overlords, it is said, when a fugitive happened to be of sufficient importance, were able by cajolery and bribery to override Sanctuary and secure the man they wanted. In consequence, Kazemain lost its popularity with fugitive law-breakers.

The populace at the termination of our visit gave us a hearty send-off, and the beggars, whose persistence and persuasiveness it was difficult to resist, having relieved us of sundry krans and rupees, called down the blessing of Allah on our heads.

The Sunni Moslems have many imposing places of worship in Bagdad. The Mosque of Marjanieh is noted for its very fine Arabesque work, bearing considerable resemblance to the ornamentations on the

Mosque at Cordova, in Spain. There is also Mosque of Khaseki, which is believed to have been once a Christian Church. Its Roman arch, its square pedestals and its spirally-fluted columns reveal an architectural school that is not Oriental.

Outside the walls of the Western City is the reputed site of the tomb of Zobeide, the wife of Haroun Raschid. The eroding hand of Time has dealt heavily with this once splendid mausoleum, but its curious shaped pineapple dome is still intact, and survives proudly amongst the ruin and decay of a dead-gone civilization. Niebuhr, the German traveller who visited this tomb in the middle of the eighteenth century, says he discovered an inscription set forth that it was the site of the ancient burying-place of Zobeide, but that about 1488, Ayesha Khan, wife of a Governor of Bagdad, was also given sepulchre there. Doubt is thrown upon the historical accuracy of Niebuhr by many scholars, and there is a legend that Zobeide was buried at Kazemain.

## CHAPTER VII

### EARLY HISTORY OF DUNSTERVILLE'S FORCE

Jealousy and muddle—The dash for the Caspian—Holding on hundreds of miles from any where—A 700-mile raid that failed—The cockpit of the Middle East—Some recent politics in Persia—How our way to the Caspian was barred.

BAGDAD is not a pleasant place of residence when the Sherki, or south wind, blows, and when at noonday the shade temperature is often 122 degrees Fahr. For Europeans, work is then out of the question, and it is impossible to venture abroad in the scorching air. There is nothing for it but a suit of the thinnest pyjamas and a siesta in the Serdab or underground room which forms part of most Bagdad houses. The local equivalent of a punkah is usually to be found here, and this helps to make life just bearable during the hot season.

At Headquarters and administrative branches there was a welcome cessation of labour from tiffin time until after the great heat of the day. But the late Sir Stanley Maude, when in chief command at Bagdad, demanded a very full day's work from his staff, and suffered no afternoon siesta. He set the example himself, and on even the hottest days was absent from his desk only during meal hours. Maude,

splendid soldier and genial gentleman that he was, boasted of an iron constitution which was impervious alike to Mesopotamian heat and Mesopotamian malaria.

The cool weather had already set in when the Bagdad party took up its abode under canvas at Hinaida. We found already there an earlier contingent which had been gathered together from units serving in Mesopotamia and Salonika. No one knew quite what to do with us, and General Headquarters was seemingly divided in mind as to whether we should be treated as interlopers, and interned for the duration of the War, or left severely alone to work out our own salvation, or damnation, as we might see fit. The latter view carried the day, and our welcome in official quarters was therefore distinctly chilling. The difficulty chiefly arose, it appears, because General Dunsterville, the leader of our expedition, had been given a separate command, and was independent of the General commanding-in-chief in Mesopotamia. Jealousy was created in high quarters. There was a spirited exchange of telegrams with the War Office, in which such phrases as "Quite impossible of realization," "Opposed to all military precedent," are said to have figured prominently.

In February, in the middle of the rainy season, and while the snow still lay thick upon the Persian mountain passes, General Dunsterville had collected some motor transports and, taking with him a handful of officers, had made a dash for the Caspian Sea.

His intention was to seize and hold Enzeli, the Persian port on the Caspian, in order either to bluff or to beat the Russian Bolsheviks there into submission, and to use it as a base for operations against Baku, which had become a stronghold of German-Turkish-Bolshevik activity.

After untold difficulties, one party crossed the rain-sodden Persian uplands, hewed a road over the snow-covered Assadabad Pass for their Ford cars, and, although severely tried by cold and hunger, succeeded in reaching Hamadan. Leaving a small band of men there to keep the unfriendly Persian population in check, Dunsterville pushed on for Kasvin, and thence to Resht, a few miles from Enzeli, brushing aside the stray bands of armed marauders that sought to bar his progress.

The goal was in sight, but, unsupported, and without supplies, and hundreds of miles from his small party at Hamadan, he found himself unable to hold on. His enemies were numerous and well-armed. Awed at first by the appearance of this handful of British officers who had unconcernedly motored into their midst after a seven-hundred-mile raid across Mesopotamia and Persia, the Bolsheviks and their German-subsidized Persian auxiliaries were for temporizing—nay, they even invited the British General to a conference to discuss the situation; and, in the hope of arriving at the basis of an understanding, Dunsterville accepted the invitation to confer with them.



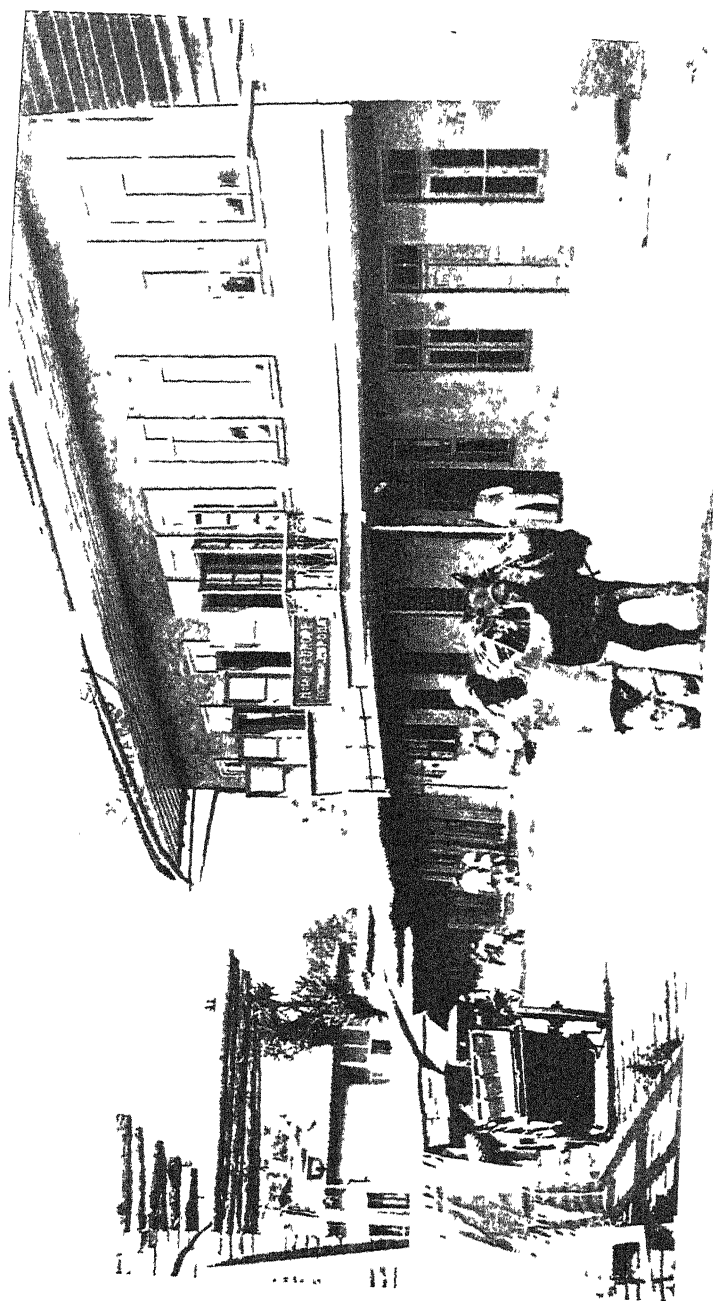
In the meantime his enemies had not been idle. Their spies were quick to report that no British reinforcements were arriving. Dunsterville's numerical weakness was apparent, and the drooping spirits of the Bolshevik Council revived. It had been cowed into inaction, but now it grew bold, and its attitude became menacing. The British General was presented with an ultimatum demanding his immediate withdrawal on pain of capture and death.

There was no help for it. Withdraw Dunsterville must, and did. The Ford cars carrying the daring raiders sped away from the Bazaar of Resht and back to Hamadan, and through streets crowded with armed and hostile ruffians ripe for any crime.

This, briefly, was the situation in the early days of March. Dunsterville had leaped and failed. He was back at Hamadan, holding on tenaciously, with a small body of officers and N.C.O.'s, no men, lacking supplies, from which he was separated by hundreds of miles of roadless country made doubly impassable by rain and melting snow, and threatened with extermination by unfriendly tribesmen who, wolf-like, were baying round him, eager yet afraid to strike.

But, one will ask, what were Dunsterville and his force doing in Persia at all? And why had Britain, who had gone to war with Germany because the latter had overrun neutral Belgium, and who had professed so much horror for Germany's aggression, why had she, of all nations, violated Persian neutrality, in-

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## EARLY H

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defend Persian rights as much  
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of Turks and Russians. It  
and sword; and now through  
ruthless war, famine and  
the land of Iran, slaying innocent  
wretched helpless populace  
and the sword of Turk and  
reason of its geographical  
being coterminous with those  
had in the early part of  
become the cockpit of the  
emasculated Government  
of marionettes, hopped about  
of a corrupt capital. It has  
even if it had, the constant  
“ King of Kings ” had no reason

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flank in Mesopotamia. The "Volunteers of Islam," a body of fanatical Mollahs with a leavening of Turkish military officers and of bespectacled professors of German Kultur, were recruited round Lake Van in Turkish Armenia. They had for their object the preaching of a holy war in Afghanistan against Britain, and the setting alight of our Indian north-west territory. The "Volunteers of Islam," moving across the Persian frontier, established their base in Persian Kermanshah preparatory to turning their faces eastward in the long trek to Herat and the scene of their Islamic and anti-British crusade.

They were destined never to behold the mountain passes of their "Promised Land," for, valour outrunning their discretion, these militants of Islam and Potsdam, while engaged in the final preparations for the journey to Afghanistan, were foolish enough to throw in their lot with a Mesopotamian frontier tribe which was thirsting to distinguish itself in battle against the British. The combat duly took place, and the insolent tribesmen were punished for their foolhardiness. In fact, they found extinction, instead of the looked-for distinction; and many "Volunteers of Islam" were also given sepulture by the vultures, the *concessionnaires des tombeaux* in these parts. As for the survivors, they readily abandoned Kermanshah for the greater security offered by the Armenian highlands.

After the Russian military collapse in the winter of 1917, followed by the Bolshevist triumph and the

signing of the shameful treaty of Brest Litovsk, the Germans and their infamous allies, the followers of Lenin and Trotsky, lost no time in making themselves masters of the Caucasus. Tiflis fell, and arrayed itself under the Red Banner of National Shame; Armenians, Georgians, and Tartars, all victims of Turkish misrule, but hating each other more cordially than they collectively hated the Osmanli oppressor, wrangling over their respective claims to independent nationhood, varied by the absorbing passion of slitting each other's throats, were all too busy to seek to make common cause against the Bolshevik wolf when it appeared before their fold in the guise of a German lamb.

Would that all these nationless peoples of the Caucasus, who with so much vehemence are always pleading their own inalienable right to self-determination, possessed military gifts commensurate with their brilliant, perfervid, never failing oratory! If they could fight only half as well as they can talk, what unrivalled soldiers they would be!

The Bolsheviks and their German masters and paymasters, coming down the railway line from Tiflis, speedily possessed themselves of Baku and its oil wells. Immediately opposite Baku, and on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, is Krasnovodsk, the terminus of the Transcaspian Railway, that important strategic line which links up the khanates of Russian Turkestan, connects, on the one hand, Samarkand with Orenburg and the main *reseau* of

Russian railways, and, on the other, bifurcates and comes to a dead stop—resembling the extended jaws of a pincers—within hailing distance of the Afghan frontier. Once masters of the Caspian littoral and of the Russian gunboats which patrolled its waters, the Bolsheviks and their German allies were free to use the Transcaspian Railway, and to menace India seriously by way of Afghanistan.

At all events, they lost no time in invading Persia from the sea by way of Enzeli. Here they found eager sympathisers and willing auxiliaries in the Persian Democrats, a political party with considerable influence and following in Resht itself and throughout the Persian provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran. The Democrats laid claim to represent the intelligentsia of North-Eastern Persia. Their profession of political faith was, broadly, "Persia for the Persians," the abolition of all foreign meddling in Persian affairs, and the ending of the Russian and British spheres of influence. But it was against the British that their virulent hatred and political conspiracies were chiefly directed. While they feared the British, they despised the Russians. As one of the leaders of this "Young Persia Movement" said to me when we had a heart-to-heart talk in Kasvin, "To our sorrow we find that the British are honest and incorruptible, therefore they are dangerous. Should they decide to stay here, we could never hope to turn them out. On the other hand, to our joy we recognize that neither the Russians nor the

Turks possess these high moral attributes, consequently there was always the hope that some day we might be able to escort the last of them to the frontier."

The "Young Persia" representative put his case concisely, fairly, and without any tinge of political jaundice. None better than he realized the impotency of the vacillating Teheran Government to enforce its paper protests against the violation of Persian neutrality. Its only military instrument was a ragged, unpaid, undisciplined rabble, which international courtesy has been wont to designate an Army. The Persian Democrats therefore linked up with the Bolsheviks. But it would be erroneous to assume that their ranks were recruited entirely from disinterested patriots, inspired by the highest altruistic ideals, burning to rid their country of the foreigner—be he Briton, Turk, or Russian—in order that Persia might be free to work out her own political salvation in her own way and without interference from anybody. Some there were in the ranks of the Democrats actuated only by love of country, as they conceived it, who, with noble resolve in their hearts, trod the financially unremunerative path which led to the goal of political glory. There was always plenty of elbow-room and never any overcrowding on this road. The great majority of the Democrats, as I found them, put pul (*i.e.*, money) before patriotism, and for them a Turkish lira, or a twenty-mark piece, had an irresistible attraction.



With the downfall of Russia as a military power, her Army, which had pushed down through Persia in order to effect a junction with the British in Mesopotamia, rapidly retreated, and as rapidly disintegrated, smitten by the deadly plague of Bolshevism. Discipline and organization were at an end; obedience was no longer rendered to Army Chief, corps commander, or regimental officer, but to the soldiers' own "Red Committee"—usually with a sergeant at its head—which, besides usurping the functions of Generalissimo, became the Supreme War Council of the Army, giving an irrevocable decision upon everything from high strategy to vulgar plundering. Now two Russian generals, named Bicherakoff and Baratof, appeared on the troubled stage of Persian politics. From the débris of an army they had gathered round them the odds and ends of stray Russian regiments, bands of irregulars from Transcaucasia, and Cossacks from the Don and the Terek—stout fighting men of the mercenary type, whose trade was war and whose only asset was their sword.

Both Bicherakoff and Baratof were loyal to the cause of Imperial Russia and her Allies, and refused to bend the knee to Lenin and Trotsky. They were willing to make war on our side as subsidized auxiliaries. In short, these heterogeneous cohorts were for sale; they possessed a certain military value, and the British taxpayer bought them at an inflated price, and also their right, title, and interest, if any, in the abandoned motor lorries, machine-guns, and

military stores of all kinds which littered the track of the retreating, disorganized Russian Army. The British military treasure-chest also honoured a proportion of the Russian requisition notes which had been given to the extent of millions of roubles in exchange for Persian local supplies, and which the Persian holders knew full well would never be liquidated by any Bolshevik Government in Petrograd or elsewhere.

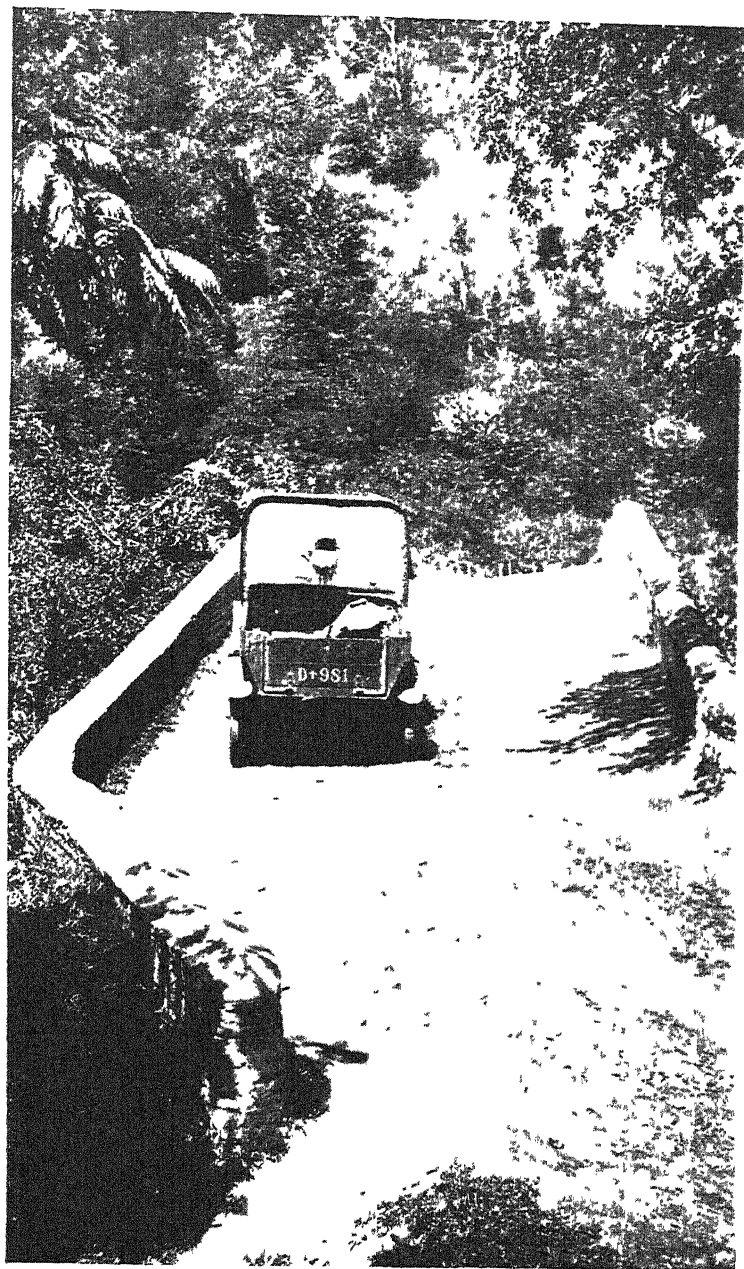
Our friends, the Russians, having sold us their supplies for the common cause, made some difficulty about handing them over. The soldiers, it was said, claimed that war material was national property, and objected to its appropriation unless they, representing so many national shareholders, were each paid on a cash basis a proper proportion of the purchase price. This was a deadlock that was never satisfactorily adjusted. Our new Russian allies also offered to sell us the 160 miles of road from Kasvin to Hamadan which had been constructed by a Russian Company, and was being maintained by a system of tolls levied upon goods and passengers. But the price was so formidable that, if we had closed with the bargain, the British Exchequer would have needed the wealth of Golconda to complete the transaction.

Bicherakoff and his volunteers concentrated at Kasvin, at the junction of the roads leading to Resht and the Caspian in the north, to Tabriz in the north-west, to Teheran in the south-east, and to Hamadan

and Kerman-shah in the south-west. Here they imposed an effective barrier against the flowing tide of Bolshevism coming from the Caspian, and it was hoped that they might be able to keep open the road from Kasvin to Resht and Enzeli.

The distance from Kasvin to Resht is about eighty miles. Half-way, at Manjil, there is a road bridge over the Kizil Uzun River, and the country beyond is covered with thick jungle, which fringes the roadway on both sides.

About the time the Russians were sitting down in Kasvin awaiting developments, there appeared in the jungle country a redoubtable leader named Kuchik Khan, who was destined to exercise considerable influence on the military situation in the region of the Caspian. Kuchik Khan was a Persian of a certain culture and refinement of manner, endowed with courage, personal magnetism, and great force of character. He possessed, moreover, no little knowledge of European political institutions and of the science of government as practised in the West. The personification of militant "Young Persia," he proclaimed himself an apostle of reform. Preaching the doctrine of Persian Nationalism in the broadest sense, he declared that he was the uncompromising enemy alike of misrule within and interference from without. Recruits, attracted by good pay and the prospects of loot, flocked to his standard from amongst the harassed and overtaxed peasant population, and were soon licked into tolerable military shape by



STONE FIELD AT SHAN KUD WHICH IS THE TROBARI PLACE OF ATTACK FROM ANY OF THE JUNGLE THIEFS. IT WAS AT THIS POINT THAT THE HANTS SUFFERED CASUALTIES.



German and Turkish officers. Rifles, machine-guns, ammunition, military equipment, and money were also forthcoming from German sources. His army, which had its own distinctive uniform, grew rapidly, and it was not long before Kuchik Khan found himself strong enough to bid defiance to Teheran and its feeble Government. He set up as a semi-independent ruler, and had his own council of political and military advisers. Kuchik Khan's tax-gatherers collected and appropriated the Shah's revenues in Gilan and in part of Mazandaran, and his power became paramount from Manjil to the Caspian Sea. The Jungalis, as his followers were called, under German instruction became proficient in trench warfare. Selecting a good defensive position, they dug themselves in along the Manjil-Resht road, and their advanced outposts held the bridge head at Manjil itself.

Kuchik Khan, as Persians go, was relatively honest, and was possibly inspired by patriotic zeal; but this did not prevent his becoming a pliant and very useful military asset in the hands of the enemies of the Entente Powers. At their behest he bolted and barred the door giving access to the Caspian, and for the British, at all events, labelled it, "On ne passe pas!"

## CHAPTER VIII

### OFF TO PERSIA

Au revoir to Bagdad—The forts on the frontier—Customs house for the dead—A land of desolation and death—A city of the past—An underground mess—Methods of rifle thieves.

It was not until the beginning of April (1918) that the intermittent rainfall practically ceased, and allowed a contingent of the weatherbound Dunster-ville party to turn their faces towards Hamadan, where our General and his small force were said to be in dire straits.

The advanced base near Baqubah on the Diala River, north-east of Bagdad, where some of our unit were under canvas, was a quagmire; and the road beyond the Persian frontier was reported to be impassable for man, motor, or animal transport. But four consecutive days of fine weather effected a transformation. The heat of the sun converted the liquid mud of the plains into half-baked clay, and the road itself showed a hard crust upon its surface.

No time was lost in setting out for Persia. The force from the advanced base began its march at daylight on April 5. Baggage and transport were cut down to the lowest possible limits, and General

Byron and I moved ahead of the column in a Ford van.

On the first night we reached the headquarters of General Thompson, commanding the 14th Division operating on the Diala. Next morning, the weather still promising fair, we were off betimes, and in spite of road difficulties, at ten o'clock reached the Motor Transport Depot at Khaniquin, the last town on the Turkish side. After a brief halt to enable us to swop our somewhat war-worn car for a more efficient one, we started again, and, within an hour of pulling up at Khaniquin, had crossed the frontier into Persia.

As we approached the boundary of the crumbling Ottoman Empire at this point, the road wound round a low hill. On an eminence above stood a tumble-down martello tower which once had held a Turkish guard; and on a corresponding height on the other side were the ruins of a Persian fort. From these vantage points the two Asiatic Empires, both now crumbling in decay, had for centuries jealously watched each other, quarrelling over a mile or two of disputed territory with all the vehemence of their Oriental blood.

Near Khaniquin, on the Turkish side, we saw what had once been the Quarantine and Customs Stations. It was here that the corpse caravans, coming from the interior of Persia and bound for Kerbela, one of the holy places of the Shi'ite sect, halted and paid Customs dues. It is the pious wish of every Persian



to be buried at Kerbela, near the shrine of Hossain the Martyr. The town is in the Vilayet of Bagdad, and in pre-war days the Turks derived a very handsome revenue from tolls levied on dead Persians who were being transported to their last resting-place beside the waters of the Euphrates. It was a gruesome but lucrative traffic for the living, whether Customs officials or muleteers. These caravans of dead, by reason of the absence of anything approaching proper hygienic precautions, probably also carried with them into Asiatic Turkey a varied assortment of endemic diseases. When Persians whose testamentary dispositions earmarked them for the last pilgrimage to Kerbela died, they were buried for a year. At the end of this period they were exhumed, enveloped in coarse sacking, lashed two by two on the back of a mule, and carried to their new resting-place, accompanied by bands of sorrowing friends and relatives.

We were now well over the frontier, and found ourselves in a land of desolation and death. Our way lay past ruined and deserted villages, many of the inhabitants of which had been blotted out by famine. Beyond a few Persian road guards in British pay, or an occasional native labour corps road-making under the protection of a detachment of Indian Infantry, the country seemed destitute of life. On the other side of the frontier I had heard a good deal as to the appalling economic conditions of Persia, and of the shortage of food; but now,

brought face to face with the terrible reality. I understood for the first time its full significance.

Men and women, shrivelled and huddled heaps of stricken humanity, lay dead in the public ways, their stiffened fingers still clutching a bunch of grass plucked from the roadside, or a few roots torn up from the fields with which they had sought to lessen the tortures of death from starvation. At other times a gaunt, haggard figure, bearing some resemblance to a human being, would crawl on all fours across the roadway in front of the approaching car, and with signs rather than speech plead for a crust of bread. Hard indeed would be the heart that could refuse such an appeal! So overboard went our ration supply of army biscuit, bit by bit, on this our first day in the hungry land of the Shah!

At Kasr-i-Shirin, where we made a short halt, we were soon surrounded by a starving multitude asking for food. One poor woman with a baby in her arms begged us to save her child. We gave her half a tin of potted meat and some biscuits, for which she called down the blessing of Allah on our heads. Her maternal solicitude was touching, for, although it was evident that she was suffering from extreme hunger, no food passed her lips until her baby had been supplied.

The western slopes of Kasr-i-Shirin are covered with the remains of a great city. The outline of extensive walls can be traced amidst the débris of masonry. Masses of roughly hewn sandstone strew

the ground. Within the ancient enclosure are heaps of tumble-down masonry, all that exists of the houses that formerly stood there. Some little distance away are traceable the ruined outlines of a splendid palace with spacious underground apartments and beautiful archways, once the residence of some Acharmenian or Sasanian monarch. The remains of a rock-hewn aqueduct, with reservoir, troughs, and stone pipes, which brought water to this city of antiquity from a distance of twelve miles, are still to be seen.

From Kasr-i-Shirin onwards there was a gradual descent to the bottom of the Pai Tak Pass. It is three miles to the top of the Pass, and there is a difference in altitude of about fifteen hundred feet. Whatever else they may be, Persians are not roadmakers. Formerly the only way to scale Pai Tak was by following a mule track which wound round the sparsely wooded slopes of the hill. But now British military engineers had done some useful spade work there; an excellent road had been built with easy gradients, and Pai Tak was negotiable for Ford cars, and even for heavily laden Peerless lorries.

The view from the top was superb. On either side of the plateau towered snow-capped mountains. We found in possession, under Colonel Mathews, a British force consisting of the 1-4th Hants. The Colonel himself was absent; but the officers of the battalion gave us a hearty welcome, and fixed us up with quarters for the night.

The Senjabi tribesmen round about were trouble-

some, and their leader, Ali Akhbar Khan, incited by German propagandists, seemed bent upon coming into collision with the British. It was bitterly cold at Surkhidizeh on the top of the Pai Tak Pass, and we enjoyed the warmth and comfort of the Hants' mess quarters.

This was an underground circular apartment, cut out of the earth, into which you descended by a flight of wooden steps. The top was roofed with canvas, tent fashion.

Rifle thieves were active in the camp at Surkhidizeh. Wandering Kurdish tribesmen showed special daring in this form of enterprise. Scarcely a night passed without the Hants' Camp being raided for arms. British rifles brought enormous prices when sold to the Senjabi and other of the lawless nomads whose happy hunting-ground is the "No Man's Land" in the neighbourhood of the Turko-Persian frontier. Here a man was socially valued solely by the arms he carried. He might be in rags as far as raiment was concerned, but the possession of a .303 Lee Enfield, or a German Mauser, marked him as a man of some distinction and importance in the country, one who might be expected to do big things, and with whom it was well to be on friendly terms.

The average nomad whom I came across is not renowned for physical courage, and in daylight he will think twice before attacking even a single British soldier; yet these selfsame tribesmen would un-

hesitatingly raid a British bivouac nightly, and face the possibility of death, in order to pilfer a couple of rifles. Rifle raiding possessed for them a kind of fascination. The raiders often failed and paid the penalty with their lives, but the attempts were never abandoned for long. One method was for a brace of snipers to fire on the sentry and on the guard, so creating a diversion. A couple of their fellows, with their bodies well oiled, naked save for a loin-cloth, and carrying each a long knife, would meanwhile crawl into the camp at a place remote from the point of disturbance, and snatch a rifle or two from beside the sleeping soldiers. If caught, they used their knives, and invariably with fatal effect. Even if detected the raiders usually got away, for in the darkness and confusion it was difficult to fire upon them without incurring the risk of hitting one of your own people.

I was aroused from a sound sleep the first night at Surkhidizeh by the noise of rifle firing, followed by an infernal hullabaloo. Unbuttoning the tent flap, and rushing into the open, I found that the rifle snatchers had been busy again. A native had wriggled through the barbed-wire enclosure and, with the silence of a Red Indian, had entered a tent occupied by men of the Hants battalion. The soldiers slept with the sling of the rifle attached to the waistbelt. Cutting through this without disturbing the owner, the thief had bolted with the weapon.

On leaving, he fell over some of the sleeping occu-

pants, who were aroused and sought to grab him, but in the darkness and confined space of the bell-tent, they missed the thief and grasped each other's throats. The sentry fired, but failed of his mark. The remainder of the guard and some Indian units also loosed off a few rounds, but without success.

The night favoured the enterprise. It was pitch dark. The raider's friends, from the cover of some dead ground in the neighbourhood, sniped the camp intermittently for the next hour or two, until everybody grew exasperated, and wished that Persia with its marauding bands, and the whole Middle East Question were sunk in the deep sea.

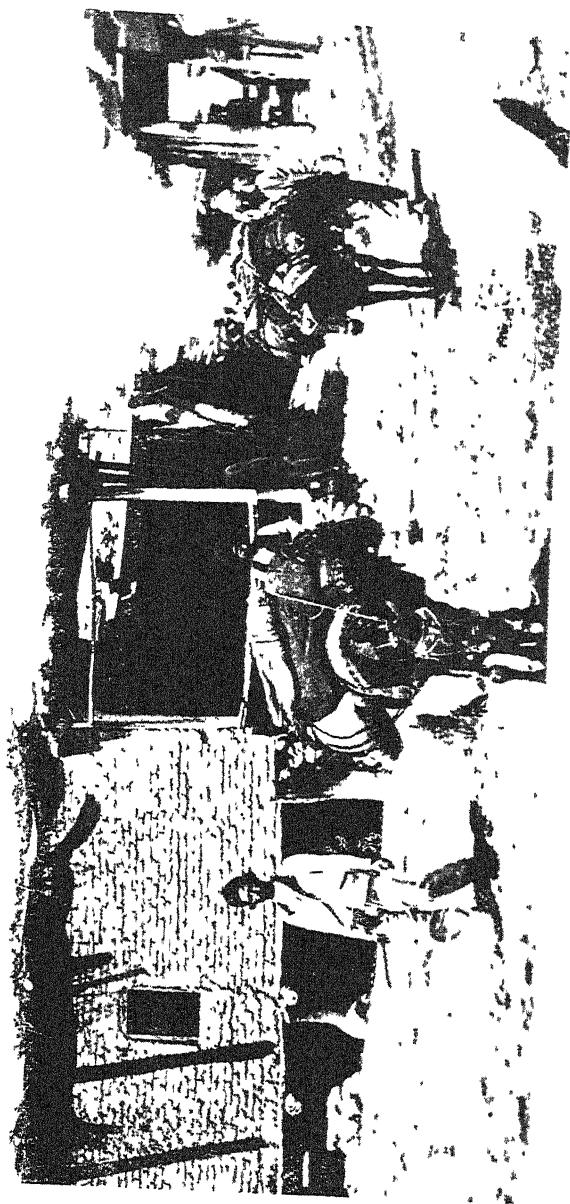
## CHAPTER IX

### THROUGH MUD TO KIRIND

A city of starving cave-dwellers—An American woman's mission to the wild—A sect of salamanders—Profiteering among the Persians—A callous nation—Wueless orders to sit tight—Awaiting attack—The "mountain tiger."

NEXT day we set out for Kirind, about fifteen miles from Surkhidizeh, where a platoon of the Hants held an advanced post. After passing Sar Nil and its ruined fort, we dipped down into a valley bordered by high hills, where grew dwarf oaks, with a background of mountains whose snow-topped peaks glistened in the warm spring sunshine.

Our way lay over a black cotton-soil plain, and the road looked as if it had recently been furrowed by a giant plough. It was hard going for the Ford cars, and our difficulties were increased when rain presently overtook us. Half an hour's downpour will convert any Persian road into a morass, and that between Surkhidizeh and Kirind is no exception to the rule. The Fords for once were baffled. The leading car could get no grip on the slippery soil; its front wheels revolved aimlessly, then by a mighty exertion moved forward a few yards, only to come to an abrupt stop, up to its front axle in a slimy



TYPE OF HOUSE AT VILLAGE





mud-hole. We temporarily jettisoned everything, and pulled it out with a tow rope and the united efforts of a dozen friendly natives who were not averse from a little physical labour for a pecuniary reward. There was no getting rid of the glutinous mud. It adhered to one's boots and clung to one's garments with a persistency that was irritating and ruinous to the temper. The fifteen miles' journey occupied four hours, and we were "bogged" seven times before the cars finally got clear and gained the roughly paved causeway which, skirting Kirind village, led to the British military post.

Kirind itself is a straggling and typical group of Persian mud-houses. It clings haphazardly to both sides of a steep, narrow gorge, closed at one end by a perpendicular wall of jagged limestone rock, which rises sheer for a thousand feet. Beneath this frowning rock-barrier nestles a village abominably and indescribably filthy, inhabited by an elf-like people in whom months of semi-starvation had bred something of the sullen ferocity of a pack of famishing wolves. There was in their eyes the glint of the hunted wild animal. They fled at our approach—men, women, and children—diving into dark, noisome, underground dens which exhaled a horrible effluvium, or else bolting like so many scared wild-cats for some lair high up amongst the limestone ridges. Some of the fugitives whom we rounded up and spoke to compassionately answered with a terrified snarl, as if dreading we should do them injury. Yet it

was chiefly the Turk, that zealous propagandist of the tenets of Islam, whose rapacity and cruelty had driven this fellow Moslem race to the borderland of primitive savagery.

Amid all the horror and misery of this desert of human despair we found a Christian angel of pity, isolated, working single-handed, striving to alleviate the terrible lot of the starving people. The angel was an American woman, Miss Cowden, of the Presbyterian Mission. Years before she had given up home, country, and friends in obedience to a higher call, and was devoting her life and her energies to the betterment of the temporal lot of the unhappy, underfed, Persian children. She had learned their language, and moved from village to village alone and unattended, carrying out her great work of charity, and content to live in some dirty hovel. A vocation surely demanding sublime self-abnegation, and calling, I should think, for the highest attributes of faith and courage! I hold no brief for foreign missionaries in general. I know that their proselytizing methods have been the subject of severe criticism in the public press and on the lecture platform. All the more reason, therefore, why I should tell of a work which is being done so unobtrusively, without hope of earthly recompense, and well beyond the range of the most powerful "Big Bertha" of the cinema world.

The Kirindis for the most part belong to the curious religious sect called Aliullahis, about

whose beliefs and rites many strange legends circulate.

One of these concerns their immunity from injury by fire, and recalls the "fire walkers" of the Tongan Islands. Aliullahian devotees, it is said, will enter a kind of oven and stay there while fire is heaped around it, making it red-hot. Then, covering their heads with the burning cinders, they cry, "I am cold," and pass out unhurt. Another ceremony consists in lifting bars of red-hot iron out of the fire with their bare hands, their skin showing no signs of burning.

Their religion seems to be a strange mixture of Mohammedanism and Judaism, with doctrines from various other esoteric faiths grafted on to it. Thus they number amongst their prophets Benjamin, Moses, Elia, David, and Jesus Christ, and they have also a saint of peculiar efficacy in intercession named Ali. Some investigators into their creed maintain that Ali and Daoud (David) are one and the same person: others think that Ali is so high up in the spiritual hierarchy as only to be invoked through Daoud. In any case, their prayer before battle is, "O Daoud, we are going to war. Grant that we overcome our enemy!" They then sacrifice some animal, usually a sheep, which is roasted whole. The High Priest prays over the carcass and distributes the flesh in small portions to those present. Communion in this sacrament appears to inspire the Aliullahian with absolute confidence in the success of any undertaking it precedes.

Another of their beliefs is that of a successive incarnation of the Deity in the greatest of their spiritual guides, seven of whom are clubbed together under the name of "Haft-Tan."

When in Mohammedan cities, they outwardly conform to the tenets taught by the Prophet of the Crescent, but secretly they continue the practice of their own mystic rites. They bury their dead without prayer (after keeping the unembalmed corpse six days), but turn his head to face Kerbela, as do the Mussulmans.

They are recognizable from their long moustaches, since the Shiahhs are not allowed to have hair so long as to pass the upper lip.

Some authorities proclaim them the remnant of the Samaritans who, as related in 2 Kings xvii. 6 and 7, were carried into captivity by Hoshea, King of Assyria; and Rawlinson, in his writings on Persia, speaks of a rock-tomb which they regard as a place of special sanctity. They call it, he says, Dukka-ni-Daoud (David's shop), because they believe that the Jewish monarch was a smith by trade.

We stayed two nights in Kirind village. Our quarters were a couple of rooms above a stable which sheltered a sundry collection of goats, sheep, two consumptive donkeys and their charvadars, some stray hens, and two or three peevish dogs. Crossing a dirty courtyard, where filth had accumulated for years, we climbed a broken stairway, and were at home. The flat roof of the stable was our promenade;

but, since it was full of holes, which were generally concealed by a thin layer of sun-dried mud, great caution was needed to prevent a sudden and undignified descent into the menagerie below. Our rooms opened on to the roof of the stable. We slept on the floor, and, as it was cold, our Persian servant bought some green wood and made a fire in the only fireplace available, which consisted of a small cavity in the mud floor. A hole in the upper roof supplied ventilation, and served the purposes of a chimney.

It was here that the Governor paid an official call upon General Byron. He sent a servant to announce his coming, and presently arrived accompanied by a retinue of unkempt, hungry-looking officials, all wearing the chocolate-coloured sugar-loaf hat peculiar to Persians. The Governor himself was a fat, pompous individual, with a drooping moustache, unshaven face, and no collar. We wondered at first whether the stubble on his chin was due to slothfulness, or was a sign of mourning. We discovered it was the latter, a brother of his having died recently through over-participation in food at some local festivity. To look at the portly form of the Governor made it quite evident that everybody was not going hungry in Kirind. As he sat cross-legged on the floor, his fingers interlaced in front of his breast, and twirling his thumbs, he looked exactly what he was—the personification of hopeless incapacity and lethargy. “What ashes are fallen on my head!” he moaned aloud, by way of expressing sorrow for the

death of so many of the villagers from starvation. Yet he himself had done nothing to lessen the ravages of famine in the district, and was content to see the wretched inhabitants die, without moving a finger to help them.

His attitude was typical of officialdom throughout this starving land. The Governor was a landowner, and probably, like others of his class whom I came across later in Kermanshah and Hamadan, had plenty of grain hidden away waiting for the day when the British Commissariat, in order to feed starving Persians, would come and buy it at inflated prices, thus enriching a gang of hoarding, avaricious rascals.

When General Byron spoke of what the British were doing elsewhere in the way of feeding the famine-stricken, the Governor's eyes brightened, and scenting the possibility of an advantageous commercial deal in cornered wheat, he replied with a fervent "Mashallah!" (Praise be to God!) The suggestion that thieving local bakers who had been profiteering at the expense of the starving population might be taught a salutary lesson by having their ears nailed to their bakehouse doors, or otherwise dealt with under some equally benign Persian enactment, seemed to find favour in the eyes of the Governor, for he answered, "Inshallah!" (Please God!)

This Governor, who had so suddenly developed a keen interest in the local food problem, was afterwards present at a full-dress parade of Miss Cowden's

starvelings. The recipients of mission charity were of both sexes, and varied from toddlers of three to their elders of ten or twelve years. All they had in the way of clothing was a piece of discoloured rag, or a section of a tattered gunny bag, fastened round the loins. Physical suffering long endured was indelibly stamped on their shrunken features and on their emaciated frames. Each was given a substantial chunk of freshly baked chipattee, or unleavened bread, and they were desired to eat it then and there to prevent its being pilfered from their feeble hands by hungry adult prowlers outside the mission buildings. They made no demur, and ate ravenously. Bread is the staple diet, and generally the only article of food, of the Persian poor; and this daily free distribution must have been the means of preserving the lives of many hundreds of Kirind children. Charity in the Anglo-Saxon meaning of the word seems to find no home in the breast of the average Persian; and each day there was a fight between local cupidity, as represented by the Kirind bakers, and foreign generosity as exemplified by the American Mission, which was spending its funds freely in order that these unhappy children of an alien race might have bread and live. Here, as elsewhere during my wanderings through Iran, I was painfully impressed by the appalling callousness and indifference exhibited by the ordinary Persian towards the sufferings of his own people. He would not lift a hand to help a dying man, and dead, would leave



him to the tender mercies of the dogs and vultures rather than trouble to give him burial.

One morning, while preparing for a further move eastward towards Kermanshah, a wireless message, transmitted in haste from Surkhidizeh, ordered us to sit tight and await developments and reinforcements. We were warned that the Senjabis were restless, and might any night swoop down on our slenderly-garrisoned post. Ali Akhbar Khan, who was the Pendragon of the Senjabis and various stray allied bands of nomadic robbers in these parts, was said to be watching us from his eyrie up in the snow-capped hills. His martial ardour had been stimulated to the verge of action by German gold and German rifles, and the promise of much loot when our weak force had been duly annihilated. To the careful, calculating Akhbar, and to the wild tribesmen who had flocked to his standard at the very first mention of the word "unlimited loot," the capture of the Kirind post must have seemed the softest of soft things. To look our way and resist temptation was like flying in the face of Providence. How that dear old bandit's mouth must have watered in anticipation of securing a fine haul of rifles, ammunition, and transport animals!

All that stood between Akhbar Khan and the realization of his project was a platoon of the 1-4th Flants under Lieutenant Gow, a Lewis gun, a dozen Persian irregulars of doubtful fighting quality, and a very unformidable barrier of two rows of

barbed wire. The camp was on the edge of a narrow plateau facing the road. In the rear, where this latter became merged in the hills, the smooth slope was like a toboggan run, and the alert Senjabis, if they so wished, might have slid from their hill-top sangars down on to the field of battle. But they held aloof; their day was not yet.

We spent an anxious night. Everybody was under arms waiting for the threatened attack. Morning ended our period of suspense and brought the looked-for reinforcements—a squadron of the 14th Hussars under Captain Pope, a couple of guns, an additional platoon of the Hants, as well as the Dunsterville contingent which had originally set out from Baqubah.

The “mountain tiger,” as Ali Akhbar Khan was called in the imaginative and picturesque vocabulary of the district, had hesitated, and missed his chance. The reinforcing party was very much disappointed at Akhbar’s display of irresolution and his reluctance to fight. Some amongst the bolder spirits contemplated calling upon him in his mountain lair. But that was not to be. When the “tiger” did spring later on, and sought to cut up a British column, he received the lesson of his life. But our party was not there to share in the glory of his undoing.

## CHAPTER X

### KIRIND TO KARMANSHAH

Pillage and famine—A land of mud—The Chukai Zabar Pass—  
Wandering dervishes—Poor hotel accommodation—A "Hunger  
Battalion"—A city of the past.

FROM Kirind to Kermanshah, our next stage, is about sixty miles. For the most part it is dreary, barren country, with a few isolated villages astride the line of march. The whole land had been skinned bare of supplies by Turk and Russian, and it was now in the throes of famine.

There was a good deal of similarity in the methods of these successive invaders. They commandeered unscrupulously and without payment, and what they could not consume or carry off they destroyed. There was no seed wheat, and consequently no crops had been sown. Many tillers of the soil had fled for their lives; those who had remained were dying of hunger in this war-ravaged region. The arable land which is noted for its fertility was forlorn and neglected; no plough had touched its soil since the passing of the war storm, and its abandoned furrows were temporarily tenanted by wandering crows struggling to gain a precarious livelihood. It was desolation and ruin everywhere.

This was the country into which we, too, now, in our turn adventured. Armed robbers roamed from hill to plain and back again, holding up and looting passing caravans, preying upon the miserable inhabitants in the remote villages, and relieving them of anything in the nature of food and live-stock that the greedy maw of Turk and Russian had inadvertently overlooked.

Little wonder that the terrified wayside inhabitants fled pell-mell at the approach of our column! It took some persuasion to assure them that they would not be "bled" afresh, nor put to the sword. Not unnaturally, they had reason to dread the exactions of a third invader, and both effort and time were needed to convince them that our intentions were not hostile, but friendly. When confidence was at last restored, the glad tidings of our exemplary behaviour sped ahead of us from village to village, carried by that mysterious agency which in the East lends wings to any news of import, and in speed rivals wireless telegraphy.

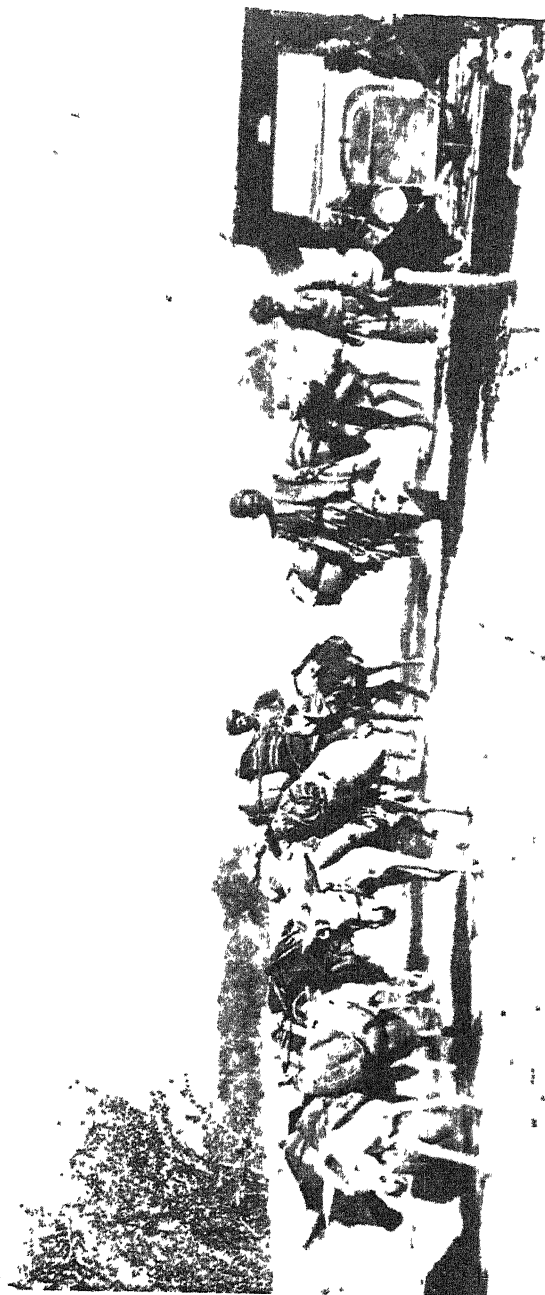
So it was that on our further progress ragged and cringing peasants, all semblance of manhood driven out of them by hunger and oppression, would crawl forth into the light of day from some dark hovel to beg, firstly for their lives, and secondly for a morsel of bread. We granted the one without question, but were not always able to comply with the second demand.

From Kirind our progress was slow. The first day,

Sunday, April 14th, we barely covered ten miles, arriving at Khorosabad late in the afternoon, where we bivouacked under the lee of the hills. The road beyond was a kind of hog's back strewn with limestone boulders which proved too difficult for the laden Ford cars. To add to our troubles the weather broke in the evening, and it rained steadily throughout the night, so that our camping-ground became a swamp. The Hussars' horses suffered from exposure, while the men themselves were wet through and inclined to be grumpy. In the morning, as the weather showed signs of mending, the march was resumed; but the Ford convoy had to be left behind in charge of an escort to wait until the road became passable.

The infantry units marched through twelve miles of mud to Harunabad, the next stage on the journey. It tried the men's endurance to the utmost. The road was simply an unmetalled track across the plain; there was no foothold in the saturated soil, and at each step a pound or two of clay adhered to one's boots, necessitating frequent halts to scrape them clean. The Persian muleteers were more fortunate. They marched barefoot, and their movements were not handicapped by the encumbering dead weight of adhesive earth.

Harunabad does not differ essentially from any other village in South-Western Persia. Dirt and decay have laid their twin grip upon its crooked streets, its tottering mud walls, and ruinous habita-





tions. The inhabitants were as hungry as any other of their class in Persia, and they crowded round the bivouac cookhouses snatching eagerly at any morsel of food that was thrown to them. General Byron, Captain Eve, Lieutenant Akhbar, and I lighted on a couple of rooms in a disused caravanserai, and the local governor, who seemed to bother less about backsheesh than the average of his fellows, procured us some mutton and firewood. Two of his servitors who had brought the supplies were demanding an exorbitant price—the middleman's profit. The Governor, happening to arrive on the scene while the haggling was proceeding, beat the grasping pair soundly in our presence, and promised them a dose of the bastinado on the morrow. Thoroughly abashed by their drubbing, and terrified by the prospect of a fresh one next day, they fell upon their knees, begging for mercy and forgiveness. The General successfully pleaded on their behalf, and they showed their gratitude by kissing his hands, before taking themselves out of range of the still wrathful eye of the Governor.

The night was cold, with a tinge of frost in the air. We sat round the fire after supper drying our sodden garments and removing the encrustations of Persian mud which had settled thickly upon them. Sleep came to us easily after the fatigues of the day, and it was with a feeling of deep personal resentment that we heard the Hussars' trumpeter sound the reveille.



Most transport mules are long-suffering animals, but they rebel occasionally. The Persian variety was inclined to be peevish, when it came to early rising and taking afresh upon its sturdy back the burden of the day. Those of our supply convoy, when prodded into activity before sunrise, rarely failed to make their displeasure felt by a vigorous protest lodged at random in some part of a charvadar's anatomy. On the morning of our departure from Harunabad the mules showed themselves especially intractable. It could hardly have been because of any deep-rooted affection for the locality itself. However, at the cost of much profanity and shouting on the part of the muleteers, during which grave aspersions were cast upon the character of the mules' ancestors, the rebellious beasts were cowed into submissiveness and our column was soon floundering anew in the mud of the Persian wilderness.

A wind from the north blew across our path and sent the menacing rain-clouds scurrying to the right-about. The sun, too, unveiled its face, as if half-ashamed of its tardiness, and speedily dispelled the curtain of white mist which arose from the sodden earth. The air was keen and invigorating, but tempered by the warm breath of spring. Men and horses and transport mules responded to the glad-some call of Nature in her most beneficent mood. British soldier and Persian charvadar each sang the wild songs of his native land, telling invariably of

some fair, beautiful maiden whom the sentimental songster had left behind somewhere in England or Iran. To the ears of one riding on in advance, as I happened to be that day, this flow of song blending with the deep note of the jingling mule-bells made sweetest music.

Four hours' march brought the head of the column to the top of the Chihar Zabar Pass. The road went sheer down the reverse slope, cutting across an immense plain carpeted with the deepest emerald green. Here wild flowers grew in abundance—crocuses, daffodils, daisies, violets, and a species of indigenous primrose, a woof of rich, glorious colouring in the warp of green. This "Promised Land," the work of Nature's own brush, stretched away from my very feet till it mingled with the grey-blue of the distant horizon. What a pleasing contrast to the dreary, desolate lowlands we had so lately traversed! It was a most welcome prospect to eyes tired of looking upon dull, monotonous landscapes. To me it was the fairest sight I had yet seen in the land of Iran.

While I was revelling in the beauty of the scene, there appeared on the summit of the Pass, coming from this valley of enchantment, three men whose dress and appearance excited my curiosity. They were sturdily built, and dressed in black, skirted coats, fastened at the waist by a girdle from which was suspended a sword and satchel. Their beards were no longer than that permitted by the precepts of

the Koran. They were without head-covering of any kind, and their long hair fell free and untrammelled on their shoulders. The trio wore shoes of Moroccan leather with pointed, turned-up toes and silver buckles. Each carried a small silver-headed axe at the "slope," as a cavalry trooper does a sabre.

As they approached, my first feeling was one of alarm, and my hand instinctively sought my revolver holster. Seeing this, the foremost raised his hand in friendly salutation, and greeted me with, "Peace be upon thee, O stranger!" They proved to be wandering dervishes who begged their way from end to end of Persia, and to judge by their raiment and their general well-to-do appearance, it must be a profitable occupation.

These dervishes, amongst the Persians of all classes, have a great reputation for sanctity. The rich help them liberally, and even the very poor will not turn a deaf ear to their request for aid. One of them chattered away like a magpie, recounting adventures which were not always of the kind one is prone to associate with the austerity of a Religious Order. They had come on foot from Meshed in Eastern Persia to Teheran, Hamadan, and Kermanshah, and were now bound for Kerbela and the Shi'ite holy places in the vicinity of Bagdad. The burdens of life sat lightly on their shoulders, and the destroying hand of care had left no traces upon their merry, laughing faces. They were a cheery trio,

forgetful of yesterday, unmindful of to-morrow, and living only for to-day.

They were full of a pleasant inquisitiveness, and withal as simple as children. "Were there dervishes across the big water in Faringistan (Europe), and had the man-birds (aviators) come to Bagdad?" they asked. I told them they would see plenty of "man-birds" and "wonder-houses" (cinemas) down yonder in Bagdad, but that an itinerant Persian dervish would be a *rara avis* amongst our benighted folk, not one, so far as I knew, having yet shed the light of his countenance upon our slow-going old Western world. With a small cash contribution on my part towards the expenses of their journey, and on theirs the formal invocation of the blessing of Allah upon my head, the dervishes and I exchanged cordial adieux, and parted company on the summit of the Chihar Zabar.

Our next halting-place was at Mahidast, a walled town which stands in the midst of an immense plain seventy miles long by ten broad. It is one of the most fertile tracts in Persia, and grows great crops of wheat and barley for the market of Kermanshah. As for Mahidast itself, it consists of a few dirty streets, unpaved and evil-smelling, and a hundred houses, the greater number of which are in ruins. Its inhabitants are chiefly Kalhur-Kurds, semi-nomads, who migrate in winter with their flocks to the neighbourhood of Khaniquin and Mandali. Mahidast is a great resort of pilgrims on the way

to and from Kerbela, and in the main street was a vast caravanserai built by that industrious and able ruler, Shah Abbas.

I rode inside the great doorway of Shah A's hostelry hoping to find quarters here, but my horse was in revolt at once. A stagnant pool covered with green slime, where myriads of mosquitoes and flies were undergoing a course of field training, occupied the centre of the courtyard, and this was flanked by festering heaps of garbage amongst which lean, hungry-looking dogs were fossicking for an evening meal.

Turning in disgust from the loathsome spectacle I encountered a *larrash* (messenger) come from the Naib-ul-Hukumeh, or Deputy Governor. He had heard of our arrival, and sent to conduct us to quarters near his own dwelling. Our abode proved to be a smaller caravanserai, its living-room opening into the stables and looking out on a manure heap. The Deputy Governor himself turned up presently, and in the usual flowery Persian speech bade George Byron welcome, and assured him that supplies of forage and fuel would be forthcoming.

He hinted that, as the prowling Kurds of the district were keen horse-fanciers, and not always able to discriminate between the niceties of *meum* and *tuum*, it would be advisable to mount a stable guard. For this purpose he sent us eight truculent-looking rascals, fairly bristling with weapons, who watched over our horses while we sought to snatch a few hours' repose.

Sleep we found to be out of the question. Our sleeping-bags, the latest of their kind from London, had no chance against the incursions of the nimble Mahidast flea, or his bigger parasitical brethren, whom pilgrim caravans had brought from the remote corners of Persia. Emerging angry and unrefreshed from an unequal combat, we quitted Mahidast at an early hour. The major portion of the inhabitants were present to see us off, and incidentally to demand a pishkash for services—chiefly imaginary—rendered us during our sojourn. Akhbar paid off the fuel and forage vendors, and ransomed our horses from the stable guard for a substantial sum in krans. He next gave a considered decision in respect to the claim of the Deputy Governor and his numerous retinue. The former modestly demanded an amount which would have provided him with a comfortable life annuity, pointing out that, as our throats were unsevered and our purses untouched, we could afford to be generous, and reward his protecting zeal. I did not wait for the end of the negotiations, but I heard afterwards that Akhbar, whose temper had been sorely tried, consigned the Deputy Governor to *jahannam*, and effected a compromise with his insistent retainers for the equivalent of ten shillings.

It is an eighteen-mile march to Kermanshah from Mahidast. The road was harder, and it was easier travelling for the horses and transport animals. There was a good deal of traffic too. We passed numerous caravans, the first being one of tobacco

and general merchandise bound for Bagdad. To this a number of pilgrims had attached themselves for safety, and had hired an armed convoy to protect them against plundering Kurds and, in a minor sense, the exactions of the Persian road guards. These latter were supposed to police the route, and had posts along the road. By way of recompense they were allowed to levy *baj* (toll) upon travellers. But their rapacity was boundless. They were said to stand in with the freebooters of the district, and woe betide the simple traveller or merchant who, journeying without armed retainers, fell into their hands! Him they fleeced unmercifully, and if the victim were inclined to protest against this bare-faced spoliation, he might always be sure of receiving a sound beating in addition.

So much for Persian road guards and their methods! The British sought to remedy these abuses by subsidizing local chiefs to protect a section of road, but the chiefs took the cash and stuck to it, while the guards still dipped deeply into the pockets or into the bales of merchandise of those who came their way. It was considered a lucrative post, that of road guard, and much sought after by gentlemen who hated the attendant risks of ordinary highway robbery, and preferred the easier and surer means of growing rich by levying toll in a quasi-official capacity.

Presently we met a corpse-caravan bound for Kerbela with its lugubrious freight. A contingent of road guards had gathered round like so many

human vultures, and there was much haggling between themselves and angry relatives of the defunct as to what a dead Persian ought or ought not to pay to pass free and unhindered over this section of the long and thorny road that led to the holy of holies of the Shi'ite Moslem.

On the banks of a stream by the roadside was a "hunger battalion" resting. Its members, men and boys, were in a state of semi-nudity; their few garments hung in tattered rags about their wasted bodies, and all looked to be in the last stage of physical exhaustion from starvation. For some the end had clearly come. They were incapable of further effort, and lay waiting for a merciful death to cut short their sufferings. Others there were who still clung despairingly to the enfeebled thread of life. They crouched on the ground, gnawing frantically at a handful of roots or coarse herbs with which they sought to assuage the terrible pangs of unsatisfied hunger. A little apart from the main body was a small group crooning a mournful dirge: it was the funeral requiem of a man whom famine had killed. The body was being prepared for burial and, before committal to earth, was being washed in the stream which supplied a near-by village with drinking water.

We divided some food amongst the sorely stricken survivors of the hunger battalion. It was all we could give. They were thankful, and one man said that he and five companions had originally started



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from Hamadan, where the people were dying by hundreds daily, in the hope of crossing the frontier to Khaniquin or Kizil Robat, at either of which places they might get work and food in the British Labour Corps. Of the six who had set out on this quest he was the sole survivor.

Kermanshah is a very old Persian city, and was known to writers and travellers from the earliest Christian times. It once was a flourishing industrial and commercial centre, but much of its prosperity and glory have been dimmed by a succession of political and economic vicissitudes. The town itself has a certain military importance. It is close to the Turkish frontier, and is equidistant from Bagdad, Ispahan, Teheran, and Tabriz. During the War Turks and Russians occupied it in turn, and the Turks had a consul and a consular guard here until their army was chased out of the province.

Outside the town itself the nomadic and semi-nomadic population consists chiefly of Kurds, and Kurdi is the language of the people as distinct from the merchants. Cereals are extensively grown, but, owing to the lack of communications, the cost of transporting grain to Bagdad or Teheran was triple its local market value, and it was a profitless enterprise. The grain rotted in Kermanshah while people died of hunger in adjoining provinces.

The chief trade route in Western Persia passes through Kermanshah, and it is also an important market for transport mules, which are bred in the

district. In pre-war days as many as 200,000 pilgrims passed through Kermanshah each year on their way to and from Kerbela and the other Shi'ite shrines in the Vilayet of Bagdad. The bazaars were well stocked with British and foreign goods, and the local traders were reputed to be wealthy. But the War and the coming of the Turks were fatal to Kermanshah and its commerce; the shops were closed, and the wealthier merchants hid their cash and valuables and sought asylum elsewhere.

Kermanshah suffered much during the Civil War of 1911-12. In July of 1911 it was occupied in the name of the ex-Shah, Muhammad Ali, by a force of irregulars under Salar-ud-Dauleh, the ex-Shah's brother. In the following February the Government troops reoccupied Kermanshah, and the troops of the dethroned Shah were driven out. But a fortnight later Salar-ud-Dauleh, aided by a large force of Kurds, was back again; the town was plundered, and the Governor appointed by the Constitutionalists had his legs cut off and was burnt alive. For the next few months the redoubtable Salar and his military opponent, Farman Farma, hunted each other in turn up and down Western Persia until the Shah's rebellion was finally subdued.

I found the streets of the town narrow and tortuous. The Zarrabiha Street and that leading from the Darvaseh Sarab to the Chal Hassan Khan are about the only two possible for carriages. In the Feizabad quarter, which is remote from the bazaars, are the

houses of the wealthy classes, with their immense courtyards, high walls, and beautifully kept gardens. By contrast, the houses of the poor look despicably mean, being simply a collection of mud hovels into which the light of day penetrates with difficulty.

The rain overtook us afresh at Kermanshah, and we had to stay there for three days weatherbound. The Hussars and the remainder of the column bivouacked on a hill near the British Consulate. It was far from agreeable. The tents were already soaking wet after the downpour at Khorosabad, and had had no time to dry.

General Byron went to stay with the Kennions. Colonel Kennion was Political Officer and Consul, and his wife, a very charming and energetic lady, who held in her hands most of the threads of the political happenings in Persia, worked hard all day in the office ciphering and deciphering despatches. In the evening she entertained her husband's guests and graced a hospitable table.

The foreign colony of Kermanshah was not a large one. Besides the Kennions, there were the Russian Consul and his wife, a French Consul, Mr. and Mrs. Stead of the American Presbyterian Mission, and Mr. Hale, local manager of the Imperial Bank of Persia. Hale has travelled widely in Persia, and knew its elusive and nimble-witted people better than most Englishmen. He was an excellent raconteur, and I spent pleasant evenings in his company

laughing over stories of adventure which irresistibly called to mind that great exponent of Persian drollery, "Hadji Baba."

Leaving our horses behind to be brought on by the marching column, General Byron and six officers, including myself, moved by motor convoy from Kermanshah on April 22nd. With luck we hoped to reach Hamadan in two days.

It is twenty-two miles to Bisitun Bridge and the crossing of the Gamasiab, a tributary of the Kara river. The brick bridge over the stream had been destroyed by the retreating Russians. It had not yet been repaired, and we were to be faced with the difficult problem of getting the Ford cars across to the eastern bank of the Gamasiab. The recent rains had done their worst for the road track which led over the great plain of Kermanshah, and the soil had been converted into a kind of pulpy clay which the passage of recent caravans had churned into puddle. The laden cars bravely struggled through it, sinking occasionally to the axles in the treacherous mire. Finally, we crawled out of this bog and struck a patch of hard road which led to the village of Bisitun, where we halted to allow the other bogged cars to join up. Beyond the straggling village of thirty houses or so the great rock of Bisitun rises perpendicularly from the level plain.

Bisitun is famous for the inscriptions and tablets of Darius found here. It lies on the highway from Ecbatana to Babylon, and was thus chosen by various

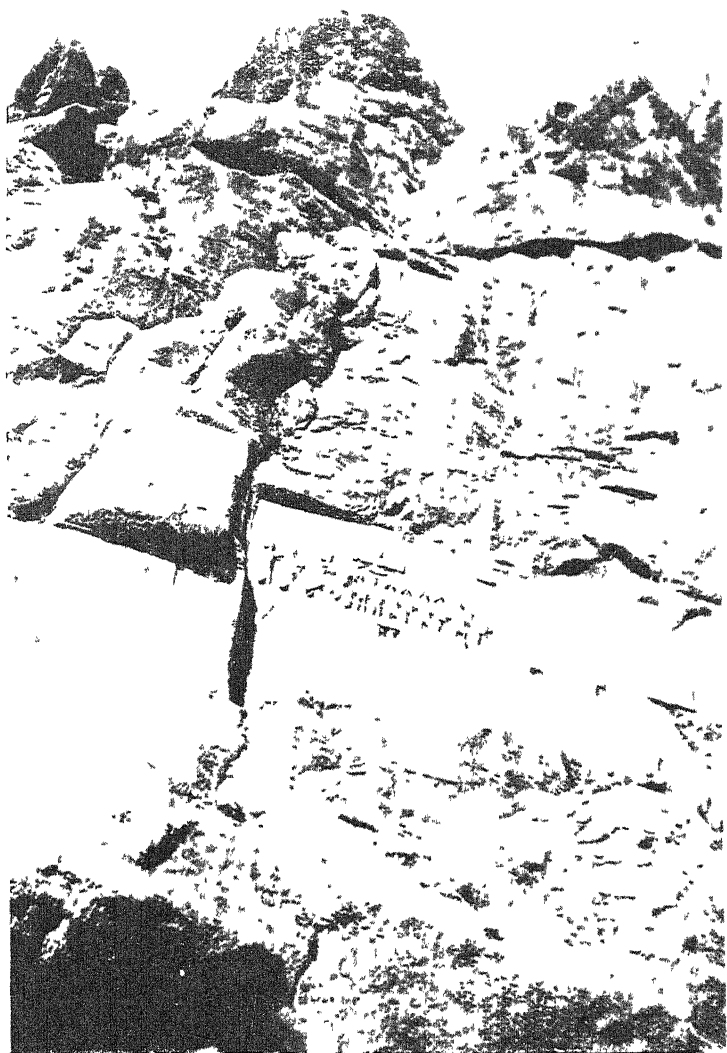
monarchs as a fitting place for the record of their exploits.

It is to British pluck, tenacity, and will-power that the world owes its definite and detailed knowledge of the Darius inscriptions. That "King of Kings," as he proudly styles himself, saw to it that the written account of his greatness should be at a height corresponding with his fame, and had it placed 300 feet above the ground on the wall of a dizzily perpendicular cliff. To climb this rock near enough to read what Persian workmen chiselled there five hundred years before the Christian era is the dangerous and difficult undertaking accomplished by Rawlinson.

The bas-relief tablets and inscriptions on Bisitun's famous cliff wall have all but one object—to glorify Darius Hystaspes ("The great King, the King of Kings, King of Persia, King of the Provinces"), and to give the lie to any of his enemies or rivals who dared to proclaim themselves monarchs also. ("This Gaumata the Magian lied: thus did he speak: 'I am Bardiya; son of Cyrus, I am King!'")

Grandiloquently the names of the countries over which Darius ruled are set forth. They number twenty-three. A Persian Alexander the Great was this "King of Kings."

The bas-relief vividly portrays his conquest of the lesser chieftains from whom he wrested their kingdoms. His foot is on the prostrate form of the most formidable of these, Gaumata, while the others are shown tied together by their necks, a sorry company



DAKUS INSCRIPTIONS AT BISITUN



of defeated royalties. Darius is depicted as physically towering above the men of his day, a giant in every way. Over him hovers the Godhead, Auramazdn, or Ormuzd, who, holding a circlet of victory in one hand, with the other points out the mighty monarch as the wearer-designate.

The whole is in a marvellous state of preservation, thanks to the conscientious work of the craftsmen who laboured at it so many thousand years ago. After first smoothing the surface of the rock, they filled in every tiny crevice or crack with lead. Then they chiselled deeply, and with astonishing accuracy, each character, finally coating the whole with a silicious varnish, a protection against climatic ravages which has stood the test imposed upon it while countless generations of mankind have come and gone.

When we reached the Gamasiab, we found the stream in flood, and a six-knot current swirling through the brick arches of the damaged bridge. There was a great gap in the central span, the latter running to a point almost like a Gothic arch. Gangs of workmen were busy repairing it, under Lieutenant Goupil, R.E.

Captain Goldberg, of the Armoured Car Section, had preceded us to Bisitun. Goldberg, who had ripped roads through East African jungle to get within shooting distance of the Hun, claimed that in his service lexicon there was no such word as fail, and that wherever a transport mule could pass in Persia



he would take his lighter cars. At Bisitun he was as good as his word. The animals of the transport were ferried across on crudely constructed rafts to which were attached inflated goatskins to give additional buoyancy. They were of the type of the Mussik raft of the Tigris, and the scheme worked successfully. But it was a tricky business when it came to lorrying motor-cars over. Our own Fords were emptied of their contents, and a single car was lashed on a raft which was then man-hauled across a hundred yards of stream to the other bank. Sometimes one of the guide-ropes gave way, and the raft and its burden, caught by the swift current, would go gyrating down stream until it was lassoed by pursuing coolies on a second raft. At other times the wheel-lashing, would part in transit, and the raft would "nose dip" at a dangerous angle. Then the Persian labour coolies, with wild shouts and cries, would jump into the water and restore the equilibrium of the waterlogged raft by clinging to its stern. All our cars were in this manner safely carried over without serious mishap, and the stores and baggage were brought on coolies' backs across the wrecked bridge itself. On the eastern bank the Fords were reloaded and the party got under way once more.

We spent the night at Kangavar, a big village at the eastern end of the Bisitun gap, and at the junction of the Hamadan Qum and Daulatabad roads, fifty-five miles from Kermanshah. Kangavar reposes at the foot of a lofty, snow-capped mountain, and is

built on a series of natural and artificial mounds which rise corkscrew fashion from the plain. Here are the ruins of a large temple or palace whose history is lost in antiquity. That profound scholar and archæologist, Rawlinson, thinks that Kangavar is the Chavon of Diodorus, where, according to the Sicilian historian, Semiramis built a palace and laid out a paradise. There also existed at Kangavar a celebrated temple of Anaitis, whose lascivious cult was once widespread in this ancient land.

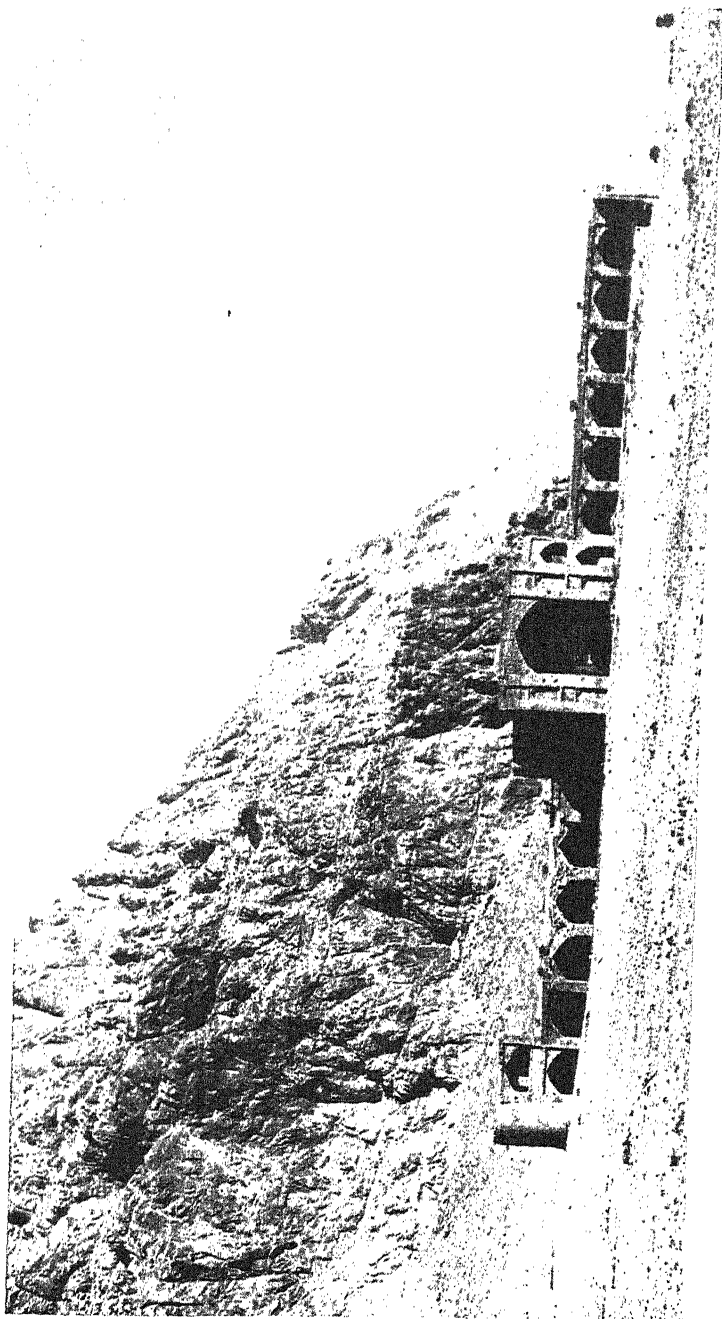
We were hospitably entertained by the representative of the Deputy Governor, who is noted for his pro-British sympathies. The Sheikh, our host, furnished us with quarters within his own residence, a wonderful walled enclosure big enough to hold a battalion, and laid out with beautiful gardens and fountains. In the trees the laqlaqs (storks) nested, and down by the cool splashing fountains a peacock in all the beauty of fully displayed plumage strutted proudly.

We were seven officers to supper, but our host, in accordance with the lavishness required by Persian hospitality, prepared enough food for four times our number. His multitude of retainers looked on while we ate, and what remained of the feast passed to them by right of custom.

It was with considerable misgivings that we heard that the shorter road to Hamadan over the great Asadabad Pass, nearly eight thousand feet high, was closed by snow. We accordingly took the longer

and lower road by way of Parisva and Tasbandi which skirts the Alvand mountain range. The cars bogged incessantly in the low, flat country, but going over the Parisva Pass, where the gradients are steep and great boulders strew the route, our progress was also very slow. The cars had to be man-handled, being towed and pushed by peasants collected from the neighbouring fields. There were several "lame ducks" in the convoy, and before evening a number had broken down altogether and had to be temporarily abandoned by the roadside in charge of an armed guard.

Night had already fallen when the leading cars crawled into Hamadan, having taken fourteen hours to cover a journey of about ninety-five miles. Weary and travel-stained, we reported at British Headquarters, and to our joy found that everyone was well, and that the Dunsterville Garrison, overawing the turbulent section of the population, was still in possession of this isolated post in the heart of Persia.



CARAVANSERAI, BISITUN.



